

Managing Your Diabetes: Healthy Eating

Narrator

You've got diabetes, so your favorite meals just went down the drain, right? Wrong! With diabetes, you DO have to be more careful about what you eat, but nothing's off the table, including dining at your favorite restaurant.

What you need to know is that the foods you eat affect your blood sugar (or blood glucose), so you need to keep track of what you eat and how much.

Cecilia Sauter, Diabetes Educator, University of Michigan

It's really a matter of being more aware of the portion sizes you eat to help you manage your diabetes better and prevent other health problems.

Dan Diliberti, Diabetes Patient

Eventually you accept it. You just change your life and change your life style.

Narrator

Dan Diliberti has been learning to live with diabetes for 20 years now. Reading food labels and measuring portions have become second nature to both him and his wife, Ann.

Dan Diliberti, Diabetes Patient

My wife is very supportive, she's very much into diet and nutrition. So, we're just more aware of what we're eating and how we're eating.

Narrator

Dan admits it's not always easy, especially when it comes to traveling or going to parties.

Dan Diliberti, Diabetes Patient

I tend to slip sometimes on those occasions and I come back and pay the price in terms of I need to run a couple of miles on my treadmill to get the sugar levels down. And sometimes I just have to grin and bear it. I, you know, I made a mistake, I'll do better next time. I just have to forgive myself and move on.

Narrator

Dan is extra careful when he gets sick or if he's under a lot of stress, because stress increases blood sugar levels.

Dan Diliberti, Diabetes Patient

When I'm undergoing a stressful situation, I just have to watch what I'm eating more carefully because it seems like it gets converted to sugar, no matter what I eat.

Narrator

For anyone with diabetes, a healthy meal plan should be balanced, with carbohydrates, fiber, protein, lots of non-starchy vegetables and limited amounts of heart-healthy fats. Recommended carbohydrates include whole grain bread, oatmeal, potatoes and brown or wild rice. Fiber could come from beans, whole grains, fruits and vegetables. For protein, skinless chicken or turkey, fish, lean beef choices and eggs are good options. Green, leafy vegetables and heart-healthy fats such as olive, peanut or canola oil, walnuts, almonds and flax seed should be part of your daily meal plan.

Here are some other tips for balancing your diet to stay healthy:

- Count carbohydrates: "Carbs" are found in whole grains like breads and pasta, fruits, some vegetables, dairy products and desserts. Remember, the amount of carbohydrates that you eat will affect your blood sugar, not the type of carbohydrate. A limited amount of sweets can be part of a healthy meal plan, but they do have more calories and fat than other carbs.

- Read food labels: Look for foods with three or more grams of fiber per serving and avoid saturated and trans fats.
- Measure each serving: It's very easy to eat more food than you need without realizing it. A diabetes educator can show you easy ways to measure your food.
- Develop a meal plan: Learn portion sizes and develop meal plans that work for you.

Dan Diliberti, Diabetes Patient

The more I plan the meals, the better off I am. I start going off the wagon, so to speak, when I don't have the food that's ready when I'm hungry and I tend to allow myself more than I should.

Cecilia Sauter, Diabetes Educator, University of Michigan

The goal of eating healthy is to regulate your blood sugar level to keep you from feeling sick. Changing your eating habits can seem overwhelming. But by working with a diabetes educator you can start with simple goals and develop a realistic plan to tackle them.

Narrator

Healthy Eating. One of 7 steps to a healthier you.