

Blood Sugar and Heart Disease

If your doctor has told you that you have type 2 diabetes, prediabetes, or metabolic syndrome, controlling your blood sugar is very important to reduce your risk of heart disease. If you change your nutrition and physical activity habits, it will help control your blood sugar.

Carbohydrates and Blood Sugar Control

Carbohydrate foods raise your blood sugar. Your blood sugar may go too high if you eat a large amount of carbohydrate foods at one time, like a large serving of pasta or rice. You don't have to stop eating carbohydrate foods, but eating smaller portions of these foods throughout the day will help you with blood sugar control. A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you learn how to count carbohydrates and figure out how much is right for you.

- Many women find it helpful to keep their carbohydrates between 30–45 grams each meal.
- Many men find that 45–60 grams of carbohydrates each meal works well.
- If you eat snacks, limit them to 15–30 grams of carbohydrates.

Creating a Meal for Blood Sugar Control

Non-Starchy Vegetables—Low in Carbohydrates

Fill $\frac{1}{2}$ your plate with colorful, non-starchy vegetables, like asparagus, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, kale, collard greens, eggplant, green beans and spinach.

Lean Protein-Rich Foods – Low in carbohydrates

Fill $\frac{1}{4}$ of our plate with lean protein foods. Choose fish, skinless chicken or turkey, tofu, veggie burgers, low-fat cheese, or very lean beef or pork. Limit eggs to 2–3 times a week and one at a time. Egg whites and egg substitutes are great protein choices.



Dairy and Fruits – High in Carbohydrates

Milk and fruit contain carbohydrates, so choose small portions. Choose low-fat or non-fat milk and yogurt with no added sugar. Enjoy fruit with no added sugar.

Whole Grains and Starchy Vegetables- High in Carbohydrates

Limit grains and starchy vegetables to $\frac{1}{4}$ of your plate. Choose fiber-rich whole grains, like quinoa, brown rice, oats, and whole wheat bread. Choose beans and peas, and healthy starchy vegetables, like sweet potatoes.

Heart-Healthy Fats- Low in carbohydrates

Choose foods with healthy fats like avocado and unsalted nuts and seeds. Use olive, canola, corn, or sunflower oils in cooking.

Tips for Better Blood Sugar Levels

- Spread out carbohydrate into 3 meals each day and 1–2 snacks, if needed.
- Choose fresh fruit instead of juice. Fruit has fiber and will affect your blood sugar slower than drinking juice.
- Choose a small serving or avoid most desserts, sweets and snack foods. They are high in carbohydrates and do not promote health.
- Choose to drink water and tea and coffee with no sugar.
- Avoid all sugary drinks like regular soda, sweet tea, fruit punch, lemonade, and sport drinks. These drinks are high in sugar and can make your blood sugar levels rise quickly.
- Try to be active every day. If you are not doing any activity at all now, start with just a few minutes of light activity at a time.
- Achieve and keep a healthy body weight by balancing your food intake with your physical activity over time.

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you make a heart-healthy meal plan that works best for your lifestyle and support you in your nutrition journey. Talk with an RDN for the answers to your nutrition questions.

Provided as part of the **Clinician's Lifestyle Modification Toolbox** on Lipid.org. Learn more at LearnYourLipids.com.