

Diabetes self-management information series for primary care

NUTRITION

Nutrition and eating well

What can I eat to help manage my diabetes?

There is no 'special' diet for people living with diabetes. The whole family can enjoy the same foods.

Enjoy a range of nutritious foods from the Australian Guide to Healthy Eating: eatforhealth.gov.au/guidelines.



What foods and drinks make my blood glucose levels rise?

With diabetes, the amount of carbohydrate in food you eat has the biggest effect on your blood glucose levels. Carbohydrate from food is broken down into glucose which enters your bloodstream.

The more carbohydrate you eat, the higher your blood glucose levels, the more pressure on your pancreas to produce insulin.

What are carbohydrate foods?

We need carbohydrates for energy. Many carbohydrate foods are an important source of fibre, vitamins and minerals.

Carbohydrates: nutrient rich

Aim to include these carbohydrate foods daily:

- Wholegrain bread
- Wholegrain cereal
- Pasta
- Noodles
- Fruit
- Milk
- Yoghurt
- Potato
- Corn
- Legumes (beans)
- Rice



Carbohydrates: high added sugars, fats or salts

Aim to eat these carbohydrate foods less often or in small portions:

- Biscuits
- Cakes or muffins
- Jam, honey, syrups
- Fruit juices
- Regular soft drinks
- Chocolate and lollies
- Chips
- Pies or pastries



There are two things to consider when eating carbohydrates:

1. The **amount** of carbohydrate you eat: the larger the serve (or portion) of carbohydrate you eat, the greater the rise in your blood glucose levels will be. Try to keep your portion of carbohydrate foods to 1/4 of your plate.

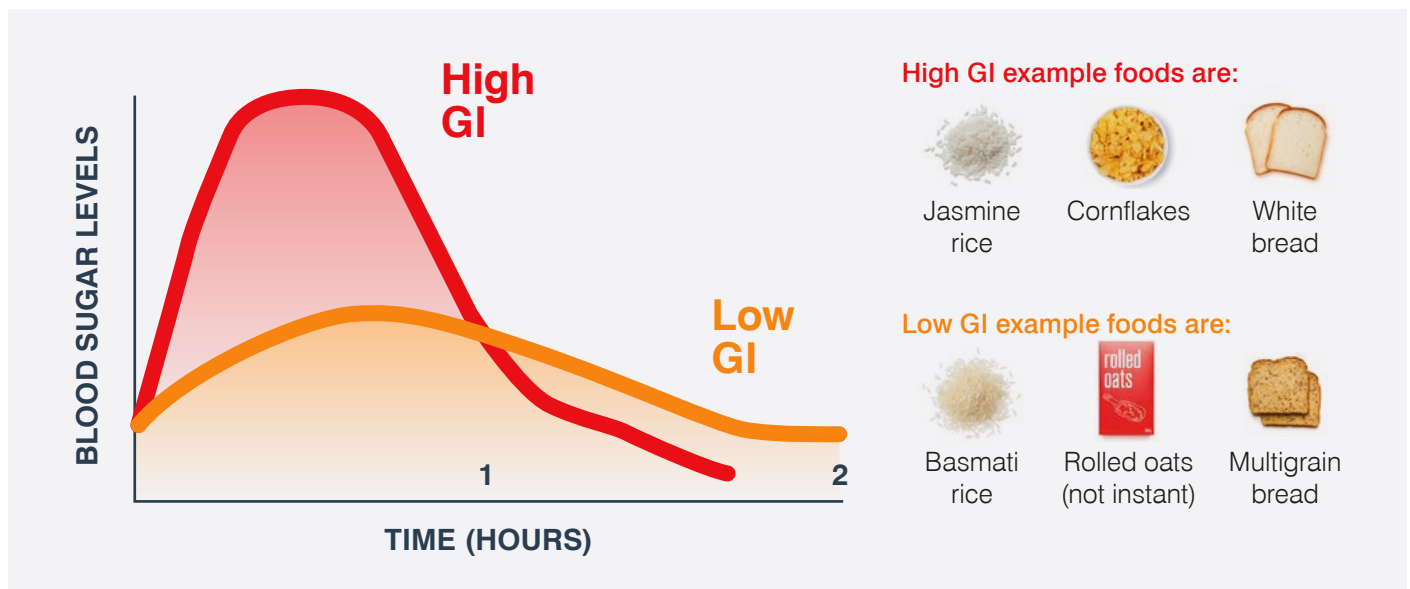
1/2 plate vegetables
Choose a variety of colours, e.g. green, yellow, orange and red.

Water
Avoid sugary drinks

1/4 plate carbohydrate foods
Try to swap higher GI for lower GI carbohydrates

1/4 plate protein
Fish, poultry, meat or meat alternatives, tofu, legumes and eggs

2. The **type** of carbohydrate you eat is also important. The quicker your body can digest the carbohydrate and turn it into glucose, the faster your blood glucose levels will rise after the meal. For example, a biscuit versus a slice of multigrain bread: the biscuit will be broken down into glucose fairly quickly; the multigrain bread will be digested over a longer period of time, releasing glucose at a steadier rate. This is known as the **Glycaemic Index (GI)**. Where you can, try to swap out higher GI foods for lower GI foods.



Regular meals

Aim to have regular meals evenly spread across the day. This will help stabilise your blood glucose and maintain your energy levels. Try to include at least three meals each day and mid-meal (low GI) snacks if you are hungry.

Extra support

Making dietary changes can be hard, with or without diabetes. You are not alone. Make an appointment with an Accredited Practising Dietitian to work out where you can start.

Remember that making small changes will have lasting benefits for your health and wellbeing.

Further resources

NDSS (National Diabetes Services Scheme)

Contact the NDSS on **1800 637 700** to order printed copies, or visit ndss.com.au/about-diabetes/resources

- [Healthy meal ideas](#)
- [The glycemic index](#)
- [Healthy snacks](#)
- [Alcohol](#)

Baker Heart and Diabetes Institute

Visit baker.edu.au/health-hub/fact-sheets

- [Plating it up](#)
- [Making healthy meals](#)
- [Healthy snacks](#)
- [Label reading](#)
- [Eating out](#)
- [Supermarket shopping guide](#)
- [Convenience meals](#)

Diabetes SA video: [Health Eating](#)
(visit diabetessa.com.au)

Diabetes NSW recipes: [Recipes](#)
(visit diabetesnsw.com.au)

The Heart Foundation: [Healthy eating](#)
(visit heartfoundation.org.au)

Next steps

- Medications
- Non-insulin injectable medications

Need help? Phone **6215 9000** or visit diabetestas.org.au



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