Back to Basics: Diabetes Nutrition Guidelines

In the fall of 2013, the American Diabetes Association updated the nutrition guidelines for the control of diabetes in adults. These guidelines are based on the most current research and experience of diabetes experts around the world. Not too much changed, but here are the highlights:

**Weight control:** Losing just 5-10% of your current weight, if you are overweight, can help blood glucose control, lower blood pressure and improve cholesterol and triglyceride levels. The greatest benefits are in those newly diagnosed, but anyone can benefit.

**Eating Pattern:** No one “diabetic” meal plan works for everyone. Based on your current eating habits and blood glucose readings, you and your dietitian can design the best eating pattern for your needs. Some people find that the Mediterranean or D.A.S.H. diet is a good place to start.

**Carbohydrate:** Both sugar and starch will raise your blood glucose. The best sources of carbohydrate are vegetables, fruits, non-fat and low fat dairy foods and whole grains. Foods that have a low glycemic index may help keep blood glucose lower after meals.

**Sugars:** You can substitute sugary foods for some of your other foods that contain carbohydrate. Do this for equal amounts of carbohydrate to keep your blood glucose in control. Don’t have sugary foods too often since they often contain more calories and fat. Just like people without diabetes need to eat less sugar, you need to limit your intake for good health.

**Fructose:** Fructose is a sugar found in a lot of food. The fructose in fruit may not raise the blood glucose as high as other forms of sugar. However high fructose corn syrup is processed and may increase weight gain and worsen heart disease risk. Use very little.

**Fiber:** We need about 14 grams of fiber for every 1000 calories we consume. That means that most people need 25-35 grams per day. Get it naturally from vegetables, fruits and whole grains instead of from foods that have fiber added to them.

**Protein:** There is no special level of protein needed for people with diabetes. Even someone with kidney disease appears to need at least the same amount recommended for everyone else. Protein, however, increases the insulin response, so do not use foods containing protein and carbohydrate to treat low blood glucose reactions. To lower unhealthy fats, choose protein sources like fish, seafood, nuts and beans and peas instead of fatty meats and poultry with skin.
Fats and Oils: Modest intakes of liquid oils, nuts, seeds and fatty fish provide healthy fats that increase a feeling of fullness and help us absorb certain vitamins. To keep unhealthy solid fats low, eat less fatty meat, poultry with skin and whole fat dairy foods. Some foods like certain margarines contain plant stanols and sterols. These can lower high cholesterol levels, but use them carefully since some are high in fat.

Alcohol: If you drink, do not consume more than 1 drink per day if you are female and two drinks per day if you are male. One drink equals 5 ounces of wine, 1 ½ ounces of hard liquor and 12 ounces of beer.

Sodium: Most adults with diabetes have high blood pressure. Keep your intake of sodium to less than 2300 milligrams per day. This includes salt you add and the sodium already in food.

Supplements: At this time there is not enough evidence to support taking any dietary or herbal supplement to prevent or control diabetes.

Health Insurance Update for People with Diabetes (Part 1 of a two part article)

According to the American Diabetes Association, the Affordable Care Act passed in 2010 has some changes that will help people with diabetes. Some parts of the law were in effect before 2014. Others only started in 2014. Here are some of the key parts that were in effect before 2014:

- Health insurance plans can no longer deny coverage to children because they have a pre-existing condition like diabetes.
- Young adults can stay on their parents’ health insurance until they are 26 as long as the plan covers dependents.
- Most health plans offer certain preventive health services at no charge. These include diabetes screening for adults with high blood pressure; obesity screening and counseling; diabetes screening for pregnant women; and some preventive services for children.
- Medicare will also offer certain free preventive services including medical nutrition therapy for those with diabetes and an annual wellness visit to get or update a personal preventive health plan.
- There are now no dollar limits on the amount the insurance company will spend on “essential health benefits” as long as the person is enrolled in that company’s health insurance plan.
- People on Medicare that spend so much money on prescription drugs that they fall into the coverage gap which forces them to pay the total costs of their medicines, will gradually get more savings on those medicines until the gap totally disappears in 2020.
• Anyone applying for health insurance now gets a “plain language” summary of what that plan will cover. This will include a coverage example for managing Type 2 diabetes. While this example will not detail your personal costs, it will help you to compare plans. You can also get a list of definitions of terms so you understand your health coverage better. You may also be able to get this information in other languages if you ask.

Preventing Car Accidents Due to Low Blood Glucose

While just having diabetes does not seem to increase your risk for traffic accidents compared to other people, there is a certain subgroup who are more likely to have accidents due to low blood glucose.

An article in *Clinical Diabetes* states that a person with diabetes is more likely to have a motor vehicle accident if he or she experienced or currently has any of the following situations:

• Had a severe low blood glucose reaction in the last two years
• Had to have someone else drive because their blood glucose was too low
• Had a collision in the last year, especially if it was related to a low blood glucose reaction.

• Does not notice symptoms of low blood glucose until it is very low (called hypoglycemia unawareness)
• Has both diabetes and sleep apnea.
• Takes a diabetes pill called a sulfonylurea along with insulin and a drug called a benzodiazapine. A benzodiazapine usually is taken to control anxiety, seizures, insomnia, depression or panic attacks.
• Uses insulin and drink alcohol without eating.
• Has chronic kidney disease and use insulin and a sulfonylurea.
• Has neuropathy (diabetic nerve damage) in the feet or hands.
• Has irregular sleep and eating habits.
• Doesn’t check blood glucose regularly when on insulin.
• Doesn’t understand how to check for low blood glucose and treat it correctly.

If you are at higher risk for an accident, always check your blood glucose before you drive. Then recheck again once every hour if you take a long trip. At any sign of low blood glucose, get off the road and treat it. Keep a quick source of carbohydrate in your glove compartment that can stay in a hot car. Good choices are glucose tablets and glucose gels. For each 15 grams of carbohydrate you consume, your blood glucose should rise about 75 points within 15 minutes. Do not start driving again until your blood glucose is rising over 70 and you are able to think clearly.
Recipe Corner

“Lighter” Potato Salad
Here is a modified potato salad that you may wish to try at a spring celebration.

7 medium potatoes  1 cup reduced fat mayonnaise
4 eggs      1/3 cup non-fat plain yogurt
1/3 cup fat free Italian dressing  1 ½ teaspoon yellow mustard
¾ cup diced celery  Paprika (optional)

1. Place unpeeled potatoes and eggs in two separate saucepans with lids. Cover potatoes and eggs with water. Put the lids on and bring both to boil.
2. Remove saucepan with eggs from heat. Let stand 15 minutes. Drain eggs and refrigerate.
3. After the potatoes come to a boil, turn down to simmer and cook until tender (about 30-45 minutes).
4. Allow potatoes to cool. Peel and slice. Place in large bowl and toss with Italian dressing. Cover and marinate for two hours in refrigerator.
5. Peel and chop eggs finely.
6. Add eggs and celery to potatoes and stir gently.

10 servings

Nutrition analysis:
Calories: 204  Carbohydrate: 28 grams  Protein: 5 grams
Fat: 8 grams  Saturated Fat: 1.5 grams  Cholesterol: 79 milligrams
Sodium: 340 milligrams  Dietary Fiber: 2 grams

Exchanges: 2 starches, 1 fat

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Dear Friend,

*Diabetes Life Lines* is a bi-monthly publication sent to you by your local county Extension agent.

It is written by an Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist and other health professionals from the University of Georgia. This newsletter brings you the latest information on diabetes self-management, healthy recipes and news about important diabetes-related events.

If you would like more information, please contact your local county Extension Office.

Yours truly,

County Extension Agent

*Diabetes Life Lines: Your current issue is enclosed*

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