



Diabetes Life Lines

Meal Prepping with Diabetes

“Meal prepping” has grown in popularity in recent years. But what is meal prepping? Is it something worth trying, or is it just another trend that isn’t supported by research and the expertise of credentialed nutrition professionals?

Meal prepping is what it sounds like: preparing your meals, but making them in advance of when you plan to eat them. Typically, you would prepare all or some of your breakfasts, lunches, and/or dinners for the week at one time. Most people do this on the weekend or their day off from work. You may have seen pictures like the one below of someone’s meals for the week after their weekend meal prep.



Meal prepping can be an effective strategy for people with busy schedules. Having pre-made meals can help you avoid skipping meals or choosing quick and convenient foods that are less healthy. Meal prepping can be especially helpful for people with diabetes because it can help you plan consistent carbohydrate intake and make you less likely to skip meals. Plus, it takes the guess work out of “What’s for dinner?”

Planning and preparing all of your breakfasts, lunches, and/or dinners for the week at one time can sound overwhelming. If meal prepping sounds like a helpful strategy for you though, here are a few steps to get started!

1. **Choose what meal(s) would be most helpful to prepare ahead of time.** Many people find lunch to be the hardest meal to prepare during the week, particularly if you work full time and are away from home at lunch. Some people find cooking dinner to be a challenge as well if they get home late in the day. Others have busy mornings and only have time to grab something from the refrigerator or cabinet and go. Whatever your situation may be, decide which meal(s) are most challenging for you to prepare during the week, and start there.

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2. **Decide what you would like to eat for that meal(s) for the next week.** Be creative! You may have go-to breakfasts, lunches, or dinners; or you may want to try something new. Also consider if you are someone who can eat the same thing every day of the week or if you need to pick a couple different dishes to alternate eating throughout the week. If you need some help with ideas, try using magazines, sites like Pinterest, or websites from the American Diabetes Association or USDA's choosemyplate.com.
3. **Make your grocery list.** After you decide what dishes you want to eat, make your grocery list! If you're using a recipe, be sure to figure out how many servings you will need. You might need to double or triple the recipe. Buy enough ingredients so that you will have meals for every day of the week.
4. **Check to see if you need any additional storage containers.** One thing that is easy to overlook when beginning to prepare your meals ahead of time is the containers needed to store them! You can store your dish in a couple large containers and portion it out into smaller containers each day, or you can portion it into individual containers immediately after you prepare it, like in the picture to the right. Choose what's best for you and the meal you are preparing.
5. **Choose a day and time to cook your meals.** Saturdays or Sundays are when many people choose to meal prep; but these days may not work best for you based on your work or family schedule. Choose what works best for you and commit! It may seem to take a while the first time you prep your meals in advance. Remember, you will save a lot of time and effort later in the week when you don't have to cook...or think!
6. **Enjoy!** When it comes meal time during the week, enjoy having a healthy, delicious meal that you were able to simply pull out of the refrigerator.

So what's a specific example of meal prepping? Maybe you're someone who tends to skip breakfast if there isn't anything already prepared. Have you thought about trying overnight oats? Overnight oats can be prepared two or three days ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator, so all you have to do is grab them and go in the morning! Check out the [Spring 2018](#) issue of the Diabetes Life Lines for an overnight oats recipe with berries!

Check out [videos](#) and [articles](#) from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics to learn more about how to meal prep. Choosemyplate.gov also offers practical tools for meal prepping, with [grocery game plan worksheets](#), [sample weekly menus](#), and more!



References:

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- Image 1: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/flat-lay-photography-of-three-tray-of-foods-1640775/>
- Image 2: <https://www.mealprepish.com/the-best-glass-meal-prep-containers/>

Probiotics and prebiotics: Should I take them?

Have you seen yogurt “with live cultures”? Or heard about “good bugs for your belly”? There has been a lot of talk about how the microorganisms in your GI tract (or gut) influence your health. These microorganisms, which are mostly bacteria, are called the gut microbiota. They affect digestion, your immune system, and many other parts of health (1). Media and food companies say probiotics and prebiotics may help make your gut or gut microbiota healthier. Some claim to improve digestion, make you less likely to get sick, or treat diseases. But what are probiotics and prebiotics, and are they really as good for you as they claim to be?

Probiotics are live bacteria that can be helpful when you get enough of them from foods or supplements (1). Some foods naturally contain probiotics, like yogurt and kefir. Common types of probiotic bacteria include *Lactobacillus* and *Bifidobacterium* (1).

Prebiotics are not live bacteria. They are fibers and other parts of plant foods that the body can’t digest (2). Prebiotics help the good bacteria in your gut grow and do their job (2). If the difference between probiotics and prebiotics is confusing, remember that probiotics are actual bacteria and prebiotics are “food” for the bacteria.

Some probiotics may be a helpful part of treatment for diarrhea caused by antibiotics, *Clostridium difficile* infections, ulcerative colitis, and irritable bowel syndrome (1-3). A few studies also suggests that probiotics may help with blood sugar control (3). This research looks at very specific types and amounts of probiotics though, so it’s not a “one size fits all”

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Unlike probiotics, prebiotics are not killed by stomach acid and have a lot of potential to help the good bacteria in your gut grow and work (2-3). Berries, bananas, green vegetables, asparagus, artichokes, tomatoes, garlic, onions, legumes, oats, barley, and wheat are all good sources of prebiotics. These foods are good for us anyway, plus the fiber in them can help with blood sugar control. The prebiotics are an added benefit (2)!

So, what's the take-away on probiotics and prebiotics? If you have one of the conditions listed above or another condition or disease that you think probiotics may help, talk with your doctor. You can also try some fermented products like yogurt or kefir before trying probiotic supplements. For others, the most promising way to make good changes in your gut microbiota is to eat a healthy diet high in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.



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Image: <https://www.pexels.com/photo/bowl-breakfast-calcium-cereal-414262/>



Navigating Supplement Shakes with Diabetes

As we get older, certain health problems and/or appetite changes may make it hard to get the nutrients we need from solid foods. Some people find it easier to reach their energy (calorie) and nutrient needs through supplement shakes. Whole foods (vegetables, fruits, whole grains, dairy, meats) are always the best choice. Still, there may be times when you just can't get enough calories and nutrients from them. Homemade smoothies and shakes are one option, but those require time and tools like a blender that not everyone has. In these cases, pre-made supplement shakes may be the best option. For people with diabetes, choosing a supplement shake can be hard because many shakes are high in sugar and total carbohydrates. So how do you choose a supplement shake without hurting your blood sugar control?

Thankfully, there are supplement shakes made for people with diabetes. There are also shakes that, while not made specifically for people with diabetes, are lower in carbohydrates. Below are examples of some of these shakes, along with the Calories, total carbohydrates, fiber, and protein in them. Be sure to read labels, because food products change often.

Brand & Product	Flavors	Calories	Total Carbohydrates	Fiber	Protein
Glucerna Shake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanilla • Chocolate • Strawberry • Chocolate Caramel • Butter Pecan 	180 Calories	16 grams	4 grams	10 grams
Glucerna Snack Shake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanilla • Chocolate 	140 Calories	19 grams	3 grams	7 grams
Glucerna Hunger Smart Shake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanilla • Chocolate • Strawberry 	180 Calories	14-16 grams	6 grams	15 grams

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Brand & Product	Flavors	Calories	Total Carbohydrates	Fiber	Protein
Glucerna Hunger Smart Meal Size Shake 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanilla • Chocolate 	250 Calories	18-21 grams	6-7 grams	23 grams
Ensure High protein 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanilla • Chocolate • Strawberry • Caramel 	160 Calories	19 grams	1 gram	16 grams
Ensure Max Protein 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vanilla • Chocolate • Mocha • Mixed Berry 	150 Calories	6 grams	2 grams	30 grams

You can see that some of these products have more Calories and protein than others. Choose a shake based on how much food you are able to eat and your carbohydrate needs per meal. You can also look at the product websites for coupons and other product information. And if you can, try a homemade smoothie or shake made with real fruit and low-fat or fat free dairy to get the benefits of whole foods in a form that you can sip throughout the day. Just don't forget to refrigerate!

References:

Images: <https://abbottstore.com>

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Abbott Glucerna. 2019. Our Products. Available at <https://glucerna.com/nutrition-products>

Summer Breeze Smoothies

(Adapted from <https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov>)

Serving size: 1 cup

Yield: 3 servings per recipe

Ingredients

1 cup plain yogurt, non-fat or low-fat
6 strawberries, medium
1 cup pineapple, crushed, canned in 100% juice
1 banana, medium
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
4 ice cubes



Directions

1. Place all ingredients in a blender, and puree until smooth.
2. Serve and enjoy!

Nutrition Facts per Serving

Calories: 120

Carbohydrates: 24 grams

Total fat: 0 grams (with non-fat yogurt)

Protein: 6 grams

Sodium: 65 milligrams

Fiber: 2 grams

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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

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