Khoo Teck Puat Hospital NHG Health | Yishun Community Hospital NHG Health

Adding Years of Healthy Life

Department of
Nutrition & Dietetics

Eating Well with Diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where your body makes too little insulin or the insulin does not work well. This causes high blood sugar levels. The main things that increase your risk of diabetes are being overweight, having high cholesterol or high blood pressure, and not being active enough.
When diabetes is not well controlled, it can damage blood vessels in your heart, eyes, kidneys and nerves. To control your diabetes well, you need to eat healthy foods, exercise regularly, take your medicine on time, and check your blood sugar levels.

People with diabetes can enjoy foods with their family and friends. You do not need to follow a special 'diabetic diet'. The healthy eating tips below are good for everyone.

1. Keep a healthy body weight

• Having a BMI [body mass index - a measure that uses your height and weight to work out if your weight is healthy] greater than 23 kg/m² increases your risk of long-term diseases such as diabetes, high blood cholesterol, and high blood pressure.
• Losing even a small amount of weight may help your body use insulin better, which leads to better blood sugar control.
• If you are overweight, try to lose weight slowly by about 2kg to 4kg per month.

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{Weight (kg)}}{\text{Height (m)} \times \text{Height (m)}}$$

Asian BMI (kg/m²) Cut Off Points	**Health Risk**
18.5 or less	At risk of **nutritional deficiency**
18.6 to 22.9	Well nourished; **Low** health risk
23.0 to 27.4	**Moderate** health risk
27.5 or more	**High** health risk

2. Do not skip meals.

- Eating regular meals helps prevent hunger and keeps your blood sugar levels steady.

3. Know which foods contain carbohydrates

- When you eat foods with carbohydrates, they raise your blood sugar levels.
- There are 2 types of carbohydrates:

1) **Simple carbohydrates** are broken down quickly and cause your blood sugar to rise fast. Eat less of these foods and drinks.



2) **Complex carbohydrates** are broken down more slowly and cause your blood sugar to rise gradually. These are better choices for steadier blood sugar control.



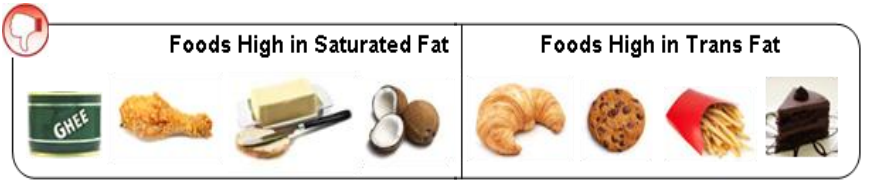
- Remember to spread your carbohydrate foods throughout the day to avoid big ups and downs in your blood sugar levels.

4. Choose high fiber foods

- Fiber takes longer to digest and slows down how fast sugar gets into your blood.
- Fiber also helps you feel full by adding bulk to your food.
- Get more fiber from whole-grain foods, beans and lentils, vegetables and fruits.

5. Choose foods with less fat and cholesterol

- Eat less cholesterol, which is only found in animal foods such as organ meats (liver, kidney, intestine, heart), seafood (prawns, shellfish, crab), egg yolk and animal fat (fatty meat, chicken skin).
- Eat less saturated fat and trans fat. Limit deep fried foods to less than 2 times per week.



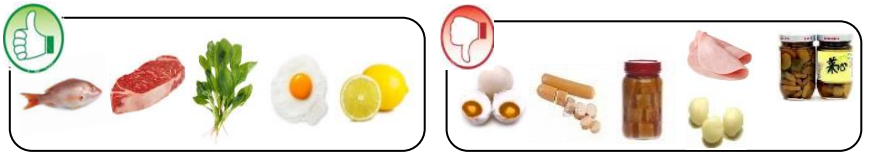
6. Choose foods with less salt

- Choose fresh foods and limit processed foods.

Fresh Foods vs Processed or Preserved Food

- Use less salt or seasoning by adding more herbs and spices to make your food taste good.

- When eating out, ask for less gravy, sauces or less salt.



7. If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation

- Alcohol can make your blood sugar drop very quickly, especially if you are taking insulin or certain diabetes pills.

- Do not drink on an empty stomach. Eat some carbohydrate foods before or while drinking.

How much you should drink:

- Men: 3 standard drinks or less a day
- Women: 2 standard drinks or less a day

A Standard Alcohol Drink



220ml Regular Beer



100ml Wine



30ml Spirit

8. Be careful not to eat too much

- Check if you are really hungry before you eat.
- If you are not sure whether you are hungry, you probably are not!

Please contact KTPH & YCH Dietitian at 6602 2420 if you have any nutrition related questions.

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