



Food Groups

Carbohydrates

Salma Mehar – Specialist Diabetes Dietitian

So a lot of the foods that we eat are from the carbohydrate group and some of these foods include foods such as bread, potato, pasta, chipatis, rice and these foods give us energy.

Carbohydrates are broken into two different categories and one of the categories is the starchy carbohydrates and the second category is the sugary carbohydrates. If we focus on the starchy carbohydrate, these are foods such as rice, bread, potato, pasta, yam, cassava, fufu, plantain. There are lots and lots of different starchy foods that come under this category. The second category is the sugary carbohydrates, which are the obvious ones which people are more familiar with and recognize as being the sugary, the sweet foods. So these are foods such as cakes and biscuits and things like your donuts or your pastries. And these are the foods that people will probably be more aware of that they need to cut down on because they're sugar. What is really important to recognize that all carbohydrates turn into glucose and it's really important to recognize that it's the amount of carbohydrates that we're eating that's going to impact our blood glucose.

Jane Puzey – Clinical Lead Dietitian for Diabetes

The other thing to think about is the type of carbohydrates because we know that can have a big influence. And so what we want people to do is to choose those carbohydrates that are more slowly digested and absorbed rather than those that will quickly shoot their blood sugar levels up. So we're looking at trying to get people to have more wholegrains, so, whole grain breads, whole grain cereals, things like beans and pulses, maybe oats based products rather than having the highly processed ones. They can be really beneficial to controlling their blood glucose levels.

Hibah Ilyas – Freelance Diabetes Dietitian

Generally, what we say is if you're looking at your plate, your carbohydrate intake should be about a quarter of your plate. So one way of measuring it is about a fist sized portion of a potato, rice, pasta. So generally you use your own fists.

Fruit and Vegetables

Salma Mehar – Specialist Diabetes Dietitian

The second food group that's really important is the fruits and the vegetables and making sure that people are eating the right amount of fruit and the right amount of



vegetables in their diet. People with diabetes generally tend to worry about how much fruit they can have per day and whether there are any fruits that they should be avoiding in order to improve their diabetes care. They might've heard that bananas are high in sugar or grapes are high in sugar or they're not allowed to eat mangoes or they should be avoiding certain fruits. But we have to remember that fruits give us a lot of other nutrients and essential fibre, essential central minerals, vitamins and antioxidants, which are very important for our body.

So when we talk about fruits and vegetables, whereas we do say that they should be limiting or reducing their fruit intake, we are encouraging people to have more vegetables in their diet.

Dairy

Hibah Ilyas – Freelance Diabetes Dietitian

Dairy is a very important part of our diet. It's where our calcium comes in from and we normally recommend three portions of dairy a day. So, a small cup of milk, a matchbox sized portion of cheese, a pot of yoghurt. Now what considerations do we need to have when relating that to diabetes? So, what we would say is obviously dairy is also high in fats. A lot of people who are diabetic, happen to be overweight as well, and that can make your diabetic control worse. So what we say is to look for the low fat version. So, the low fat yogurt with semi-skimmed or skimmed milks that are out there and the low fat cheeses. The other recommendation that I would have is, obviously, if you look at the yoghurts, you have got different types. You've got the plain yoghurts, you've got your fruit yoghurts. What you could do is make the yoghurt nice yourself. So you could get the plain yoghurt and put a bit of your own fruit in. Put some berries, a small portion of berries, or raspberries in there, so, you've made it yourself. There's not as much glucose in there as the pre-made ones.

Protein

Salma Mehar – Specialist Diabetes Dietitian

When we think about protein foods, people are really worried about whether they can eat red meat or not, whether they should be reducing their intake of meats nowadays. The advice is very important that protein is just as important for us for energy, as a fuel, for growth and repair and we should be making sure that we try to have some form of protein at every meal time. So, for breakfast incorporating, some form of protein with eggs or whether it's with cheese or whether they would like to have some form of meat for their breakfast is absolutely fine. And again at lunchtime and their evening meal to have at least a fist size of some form of protein, whether it's from a meat source or from a meat free source, there should be some form of protein in their diet.

Oils and Fats



Salma Mehar – Specialist Diabetes Dietitian

There are some oils and fats which are more beneficial for us. So, they're more of our mono and polyunsaturated fats. So they would be for oils such as olive oil, rapeseed oil, avocado oils, even oils from seeds and from nuts as well, which are more essential for us than fats from things like animal fats or fats from drippings, lards, processed meals, meats which we should be reducing. So the advice is to try to limit our intake of fats, butters, spreads, and increase our intake of more healthier fats such as monounsaturated fats from avocados, nuts, seeds, and also oily fish. Oily fish is a very important part of our diet although it might come under the fats category, it actually is a very important part of the diet. So it would come from oily fish such as salmon, mackerel, herring and trout. And we should aim to have at least two portions per week.

One of the key important factors is weight management and a lot of our calories will come from our high fat, high sugar foods. And if you are thinking about weight loss, it is important that we do reduce the intake of high fat, high sugar foods. So these are foods which are your high sugar, high calorie foods such as cakes, biscuits and crisps, donuts, pastries. Whereas you might have had these on a regular basis, these should become treats.

Salt

Salma Mehar – Specialist Diabetes Dietitian

It's important that we do reduce the salt intake in our diet, whether it's through how much salt we put in our cooking and also the choices of foods that we buy from outside. The daily recommendation for salt is five grams per day, which is a teaspoon of salt in our diet. The way we would reduce our salt intake is by gradually reducing the amount of salt we are adding to our cooked foods.

The other thing we can do is to reduce the intake of high salt foods such as crisps, salted nuts, salted peanuts, and also things like, salted nachos. So the obvious high salt foods. If we gradually reduce them in our diet, we will then reduce the salt intake as well.

Hibah Ilyas – Freelance Diabetes Dietitian

The problem with high salt is you increase your blood pressure and that means that you're also increasing your risk of getting heart disease, heart problems, stroke, and also, long term impact is on the kidneys as well. So it's not, you know, a lot of people say, yeah, my blood pressure's high, but they don't actually understand the impacts of it. It has a huge impact on your body and your overall wellbeing, especially in the long term. So we really need to watch out for our salt intake.

