

## Appendix 14: Healthy Eating and Diabetes

There is no “special” diet for diabetes; all foods can fit within a healthy lifestyle. The key is ***moderation!***

Following a healthy diet has several benefits for people with diabetes including:

- Lowers blood glucose levels
- Helps the body to use insulin better
- Helps to manage body weight
- Helps to lower cholesterol
- Lowers risk of heart attack and stroke
- Lowers risk for complications
- Improves overall health



### Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide for First Nations, Inuit and Métis

Individuals with diabetes should be following the same healthy eating guidelines as the general population as outlined in Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide First Nations, Inuit and Métis. The food guide is divided into 4 food groups:

**Vegetables & Fruits** Eat at least 1 dark green and 1 orange vegetable each day. Choose vegetables and fruit prepared with little or no added fat, sugar or salt. Have vegetables and fruit more often than juice.

**Grain Products** Make at least half of your grain products whole grain each day. Choose grain products that are lower in fat, sugar or salt.

**Milk & Alternatives** Drink 500 ml (2 cups) of skim, 1% or 2% milk each day. Select lower fat milk alternatives. Drink fortified soy beverages if you do not drink milk.

**Meat & Alternatives** Have meat alternatives such as beans, lentils and tofu often. Eat at least 2 Food Guide servings of fish each week. Select lean meat and alternatives prepared with little or no added fat or salt.

See **Appendix 15** for grocery store tips.



## Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates get broken down into glucose in the body, which gets absorbed into the blood. The more carbohydrates you eat or drink, the higher the blood glucose levels will get.

### Carbohydrates come from:

- All fruit and some vegetables including corn, potatoes and sweet potatoes
- Grain products such as bread, bannock, pasta, rice, cereal
- Milk and yogurt
- Sweets such as candy, pop, cake, cookies and pastries.



All other vegetables, cheese, meat and alternatives including wild and farmed meats, fish, chicken, eggs, peanut butter and fats and oils such as butter, margarine, mayonnaise, canola and olive oil have little amounts of carbohydrates and will only have a small effect on blood glucose levels.



## Fibre

Fibre is the part of the plant that we cannot digest and is not found in animal products. Because fibre is not digested, it does not provide the body with calories or carbohydrates.

Eating a diet high in fibre will help you feel full, which may lead to weight control/loss, will control blood glucose and cholesterol levels and may lower your risk of heart disease. People living with diabetes should aim for **25-50 grams** of fibre per day.

Foods high in fibre include fruits and vegetables with the skin, berries, beans, legumes, psyllium, barley, oat products, wheat bran and whole grain cereal products.

### How to increase fibre in the diet:

- Increase the amount of fibre slowly and drink plenty of water to avoid discomfort and gas.
- Breakfast is a good time to boost fibre intake. Choose high fibre cereals.
- Eat more legumes such as dried peas, beans and lentils. They can be added to soups and casseroles.
- Replace juice with water and a whole fruit.
- Read food label to find high fibre foods.



## Protein

Protein helps build, maintain and repair your body. It is used for energy if you do not eat enough calories. Protein also plays a role in the formation and function of enzymes and hormones. Protein has little effect on blood glucose levels and should be included in moderation at each meal to help to control your appetite

Choose leaner protein choices such as:

- Dried peas and beans
- Wild meats
- Fish
- Chicken, turkey
- Lean meats
- Low fat cheese



## Fat

Here are some facts about fat:

- It have little or no carbohydrate and minimal effect on blood glucose levels
- It helps us use vitamins
- It is the main form of stored energy
- It adds taste to our food
- It helps you feel full longer
- It is very high in calories

Because fat is high in calories it must be consumed in moderation. High fat foods may be hard on the heart and may cause weight gain. A healthy weight is easier for the heart and helps with blood glucose control.

Important tips about fat:

- Use vegetable oils with unsaturated fats most of the time. These include canola, olive and soybean oils.
- Aim for a small amount (2 to 3 Tablespoons) each day. This amount includes oil used for cooking, salad dressings, margarine and mayonnaise.
- Choose soft, non-hydrogenated margarines.
- Limit hard margarine, lard, shortening and bacon fat.



### Ways to lower the fat intake:

- Avoid deep frying
- Use broth, water or low sodium vegetable juices instead of fats or oils in cooking
- Use less fat in recipes like muffins; instead substitute applesauce for half the fat
- Remove the skin from your chicken and cut the excess fat from your meat prior to cooking
- Choose a lower fat cooking method such as baking, barbequing, broiling, etc.
- Instead of frying your bannock, bake it in the oven

### **Portion size**

How much you eat can affect blood glucose levels. Use this easy technique of dividing your plate to help with portion control.

- Start with an 8" plate
- Fill  $\frac{1}{2}$  the plate with two or more vegetables
- Fill  $\frac{1}{4}$  the plate with grains and starches such as potatoes, rice, corn, pasta and bannock
- Fill  $\frac{1}{4}$  the plate with meat and alternatives such as fish, wild meats, chicken, beans and lentils
- Complete your meal with a fruit and a glass of milk OR a serving of yogurt

$\frac{1}{2}$  your plate should be filled with 2 or more vegetables



$\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate should be filled with grains and starches such as potatoes, rice, corn, pasta and bannock

$\frac{1}{4}$  of your plate should be filled with meat and alternatives such as fish, wild meats, chicken, beans and lentils

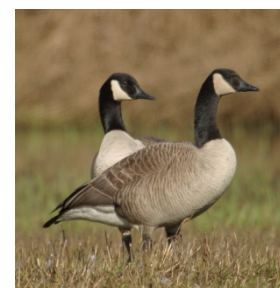
### Healthy eating in a First Nation community, off the land and water

Choose foods that are close to the way nature made them. For example, wild meats and fish, berries, wild rice, oatmeal, lentils, barley, vegetables and cooked dried beans are healthy choices. Foods that come from the land are the best choices for the body. These foods are packed with the nutrients that nature gave them and can be found close to home, and less costly than store-bought foods.

Traditional foods provide an important source of many nutrients that are often not consumed in sufficient amounts. Diets are healthier when traditional foods are consumed compared to only consuming market foods. Traditional foods are low in saturated fat, low in sodium, high in protein, high in fiber, have no added sugar or salt and are less expensive than buying prepared foods from the store. Further, consuming a traditional diet promotes physical activity through hunting, gathering and gardening and preserves the culture and traditions.

#### What impact does this have on your health?

- Eating a diet low in saturated fat can reduce the risk of having a heart attack
- Eating foods that are low in sodium can help reduce blood pressure
- Eating high fibre, high protein foods can help you feel full and satisfied with fewer calories
- Eating foods with no added sugars can help you keep a healthy body weight
- Having a healthy body weight can reduce your risk of type 2 diabetes



### Alcohol and diabetes

As a general rule, there is no need to avoid alcohol because you have diabetes. However, you should avoid alcohol if you are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, are breast feeding, have a personal or family history of drinking problems, are taking certain medications or are planning to drive. Further, do not drink alcohol if your diabetes is not well controlled.

The same recommendations regarding alcohol consumption in the general population apply to people with diabetes. Less than two standard drinks per day and less than 14 standard drinks per week for men and less than 9 standard drinks per week for women.

#### Examples of standard alcoholic drinks:

Drink	Ethanol content (%)	Quantity (ml)
Beer	5	341 (12 oz)
Table wine	12	142 (5 oz)
Spirits	40	43 (1.5 oz)
Fortified wine (eg. Sherry, port)	18	85 (3 oz)

Too much alcohol can be harmful, including:

- Leading to addiction
- Increasing the number of injuries and death
- Affecting judgement
- Leading to weight gain
- Increasing blood pressure
- Contributing to sexual difficulties
- Damaging the brain and nerves
- Increasing your triglycerides
- Damaging your liver

If you choose to drink alcohol, use alcohol respectfully.

For more information on alcohol and diabetes, go to the Canadian Diabetes Association website: <http://www.diabetes.ca/files/CDAAlcoholFinal.pdf>.