Grocery Shopping Tips for Diabetics

by ABIGAIL DAVID

Diabetes Grocery List

Food can be an incredibly powerful tool for managing blood glucose levels for someone living with diabetes. What one chooses to consume on a daily basis can directly affect their quality of life and longevity. It is very important to recognize the power of food and use it to our advantage as people living with diabetes. When I realized what a large positive impact
making small changes to my food intake had on my type 1 diabetes management, it completely changed my life and how I relate to the disease.

Before I get into specifics on healthy choices and navigation at the grocery store, I want to note that living with type 1 diabetes can easily create an obsessive, negative and unhealthy relationship with food. It's extremely important to be aware of when you're feeling overwhelmed by food or starting to have a negative association with it. If you are struggling with food on a deeper emotional level, talk to your doctor about it, seek professional help and be extremely mindful of your eating. Coping with an eating disorder as well as type 1 diabetes can be extremely dangerous and needs to be taken seriously.

Focus on Balance

When it comes to your diabetes grocery list, make sure you are purchasing items at the store that can be part of a balanced meal or snack. It's important to get items that are part of each macronutrient group, so focus on getting items filled with healthy fats, proteins and carbs. This will allow you to put together balanced meals, which will have a great effect on your blood glucose levels. When carbs are eaten alone, they have a tendency to elevate blood glucose levels quickly and to an unhealthy level. This is why eating carbs with protein and fat is essential for good blood glucose control! The same thing goes for snacks; eating a full apple is okay, but eating half an apple with peanut butter is better! You catch my drift? See, a diabetic diet is not as limiting as you may think!

Healthy carb options for your diabetes grocery list:

- Quinoa
- Brown or wild rice
- Multigrain bread
- Fruits
- Starchy vegetables
- Oats
- Healthy protein options:
- Tofu
- Lean meat
- Seafood
- Greek yogurt
- Eggs

Healthy fat options for your diabetes grocery list:

- Nuts
- Seeds
- Avocado
- Dark chocolate
- Fish

Aim for 80% Whole Foods

This one is pretty self-explanatory, but I can't stress enough how much better the body metabolizes whole foods over processed ones. Whole foods contain a smattering of nutrients that have been stripped away from processed foods. One of the most commonly stripped nutrients is fiber. Fiber is extremely important when it comes to reducing blood glucose
spikes after consuming carbs. This is why it's extra important to buy carbohydrates that are whole foods, since we really want the fiber content to be there. As for slightly processed food such as bread, make sure to check the label for fiber content, and always get the bread with the most fiber per serving.

It's also important to make sure you are eating enough servings of dense leafy greens each day! Try and include a salad with either your lunch or dinner every day to fill this portion!

An easy way to remember to buy mostly whole foods is to shop the outside of the grocery store first. Hit up the produce section and refrigerated areas before going through the aisles. After you've done that, look down at what you've picked up and make sure you've stocked up on enough, so most of your meals and snacks will consist of whole foods.

Low Glucose Treatment

Don't forget to buy low glucose episode treatment. I personally always check the prices on juice boxes and snack bars, and when they are on sale, I stock up on them. I always try to get the most natural juice boxes and bars that are also reasonably priced. Picking up a regular-sized juice to have in your fridge for at home lows is also a good idea.

In addition to getting juice, if the grocery store has a pharmacy section, I usually check glucose tab prices and ultra fast-acting glucose gels. If they are on sale, once again, I stock up on them! I find treating my lows with the same thing has helped me a lot in managing my blood glucose levels.

Try not to look at having low blood glucose levels as a time to finally treat yourself with something sweet; this will create a strange relationship with lows and subconsciously make you have more of them. Treat them as they come and when you are craving something sweet, honor that craving in the right way — eat what you are craving, in a moderate portion and pre-bolus (administer insulin beforehand to minimize the spike). Often, restricting ourselves too much leads to overindulgence, guilt and pity, so it's best not to.

Don't Let Your Diabetes Grocery List Stress You Out

Choosing healthy options as someone living with type 1 diabetes isn't so different from choosing healthy options as someone without it. The main difference is that a lot more thought has gone into our "why". When we eat in a way that minimizes the negative impact diabetes can have on our bodies, it is a true testament of our gratitude for life. Type 1 diabetes has the ability to take over our lives and rob us of dreams, plans and goals we want to achieve. When we deliberately choose to fill our bodies with foods that minimize the negative impact of type 1 diabetes, we are choosing to take control of our lives.