Meal Planning Advice for Diabetics

by YVONNE BANKS

Tips for Making a Diabetes Meal Plan

Meal planning isn't as daunting as it seems. As a diabetic, you need to focus on how many carbohydrates you eat each day. Your doctor or dietician will have informed you of your carbohydrate allotment for each meal. To put this into practice, you will need to know how to read food labels so that you stay within the number of carbohydrates you are allowed.

However, carb counting isn't the only way to plan your meals. You could also follow Clean Your Plate plan or eat according to the Glycemic Index. Eating plans allow you to eat what you want, but you will need to stay within the number of carbs you can have.

Counting Carbohydrates

You need to know one thing for cab counting: 15 grams of a carbohydrate is equal to one carb serving. Measuring will be done in 15 gram increments if you are following carb servings. The basic allotment for the servings is:

- 2-3 for breakfast (equates to 30 to 45 grams carbohydrates)
- 3-4 for lunch (equates to 45 to 60 grams carbohydrates)
- 3-4 for dinner (equates to 45 to 60 grams carbohydrates)

Depending on your gender and needs, you may have different numbers. Look at labels religiously and become the proud owner of a diabetic carbohydrate counting book. It will list fruit, vegetables, even fast food; the things that do not have labels.

Create Your Plate

The American Diabetes Association (ADA) has a program called the Create Your Plate. It is an easy way to get started with your new way of eating. There is no calorie counting, which is enticing to many people. You choose what foods you want, but the food type dictates the portion sizes you can have. The larger section on your plate is reserved for non-starchy vegetables. The smaller part is for your starchy foods, like whole wheat bread.

To get an idea of how your portions should look, get a nine-inch plate. Now, imagine a line drawn down the middle. Imagine another line across one of the halves, so you have three sections marked off. If you're having trouble visualizing, you can buy the Create Your Plate dish from the ADA website.

- For the largest section, fill it with leafy greens, broccoli, salsa, cucumber, tomatoes, or any other type of non-starchy vegetable.
- Next, fill one of the smaller sections with whole grains like bread or cereals, or choose starchy vegetables, like potatoes or corn.
- The last section is reserved for protein, like chicken breast, fish, or cheese.

- Fruit and dairy can be added if your meal plan allows it.
- Use healthy fats sparingly.
- Drink water, unsweetened tea, or black coffee.

Glycemic Index

The Glycemic Index assigns number values between one and 100 to foods. The lower the number, the more complex it is, meaning that the food will not make your blood sugar spike up. Low glycemic foods are generally in their most natural state and contain more fiber. Vegetables like green beans are a good example of this.

Refined sugars, which are found in many processed foods, cause blood glucose levels to elevate quickly. Table sugar is at the top of the GI scale at 100. Sweets like cookies, cakes, and white bread are high on the glycemic index as well. These foods do not last in your system long, and you will not stay as satiated as if you ate some broccoli and cauliflower.

You can eat more of the foods lower in the GI scale. It can be boring to eat those foods all the time, however. When you fix your meals, follow the guidelines below:

- Adding fat, fiber, and vinegar can lower the glycemic index of the food you prepare.
- Eat fruit before it ripens. Bananas will be higher on the GI scale the riper they get.
- If you eat food higher on the GI scale, combine it with a lower GI food to bring the GI value of the whole meal down.