

Making healthy choices when you eat out



Eating away from home has become a part of many people's lifestyle. Even if we pack our own meals to eat at work, we often eat at restaurants, or buy food from take-out counters, grocery stores or get door delivery.

Making healthy choices when we eat foods that are prepared at home can help to manage diabetes.

Getting the right balance and portion size

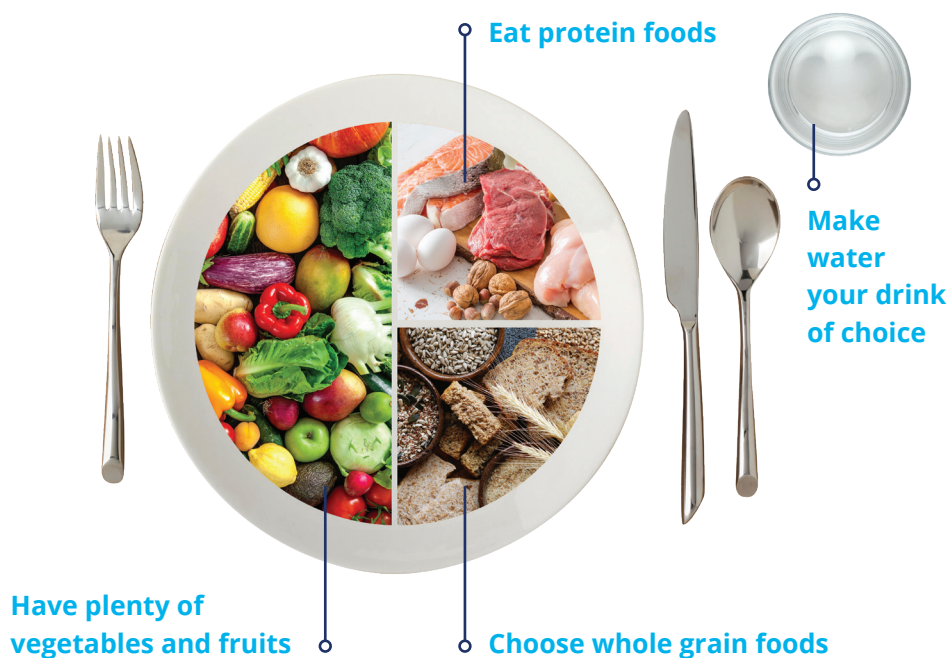
Canada's Food Guide contains three major food groups:

- Vegetables and fruits
- Whole grain products
- Protein foods

Choosing foods from all the food groups ensures that your body gets all the nutrients it needs.

The *Plate Method* below can help you manage portions and get the right balance when you plan your meals.

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day



Check your portion sizes

Foods eaten away from home are often served in portions that are too large. In addition to the Plate Method, the *Handy Portion Guide* also helps to keep your portion sizes in check.

To keep your blood glucose levels stable while eating away from home you may need to adjust the portion size, your insulin dose (if you use insulin), or your physical activity. If the serving size is larger or smaller than your usual portion or if the meal is delayed, your blood glucose level will be affected. In a restaurant, you can ask for your leftovers to be packed, share your entrée with someone else, or request for half portions.

Handy Portion Guide

Your hands can be very useful in estimating appropriate portions. When planning a meal, use the following portion sizes as a guide:



Fruits/Grains & Starches

Choose an amount the size of your fist for grains or starches, or fruit.



Vegetables

Choose as much as you can hold in both hands. Choose brightly coloured vegetables.



Protein Foods

Choose an amount the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.



Fats

Limit fat to an amount the size of the tip of your thumb.

Packing meals to take with you

When possible, packing meals to take with you is the best option. Bring healthy food from home with you, such as a lunch container with brown rice (about the size of your fist) or small roti and chicken curry, fish curry or channa masala and plenty of raw or cooked vegetables such as cauliflower, spinach or eggplant. Include some nuts, yogurt, fruits, and washed, pre-cut vegetables for snacks.



Watching your carbohydrates while away from home

Foods that contain carbohydrates raise your *blood glucose*. To manage diabetes, you need to know which foods contain carbohydrates and how much carbohydrate is in your meal or snack. This is also important to watch when you are away from home. If you are on insulin, speak to your healthcare team about planning your meals and insulin adjustments.



General guidelines on carbohydrate amount

The amount of carbohydrate you should eat is based on your individual needs; talk to the dietitian on your health care team to see what amount is right for you. Below is a general guideline:

Carbohydrate Amount	Women	Men
In a meal	45 to 60 grams	60 to 75 grams
In a snack	15 to 30 grams	15 to 30 grams

What should my blood glucose be before and after meals?

Know your target and take your glucose meter with you when you are eating away from home. This way you will know whether the amount of carbohydrate you consume is too little, just enough, or too much. This will help you to plan for future meals. Start by checking your blood glucose before you eat and again 2 hours after the meal.

Blood glucose target for most people:

Before meals	4 to 7 mmol/L
2 hours after the start of the meal	5 to 10 mmol/L

If your blood glucose is too high after meals, ask yourself:

- Did I include some protein and fat?
(including protein and fats helps keep blood glucose from going too high)
- Did I eat too many carbohydrates?
(carbohydrates are foods that raise your blood glucose the most)
- Did I get enough exercise?
(exercise can help keep your blood glucose in target)
- Should I talk to my healthcare team about changing my medications?

Try to eat on time

Your meals should be spaced 4 to 6 hours apart. If your meal will be earlier or later than usual, you may need to adjust your insulin (if you use insulin) or change the timing of a snack. This will avoid having a high or low blood glucose level. If you know you will be eating away from home, don't skip meals or snacks if they are part of your meal plan. Skipping meals may cause you to overeat when you get to the restaurant or event.

Planning your menu away from home

Many restaurants have put their menus and nutrition information online. That means you can plan in advance what you will order and check how much carbohydrate you are getting.

To get you get started, look at these sample menus for a person spending one full day away from home. Then, use the *blank planning charts* to create your own menu.

BREAKFAST**Location: Self-packed breakfast to eat at work** **Time: 8 a.m.**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Whole grain bread, 2 slices	30
1 Boiled egg	0
1 Medium orange	15
Tea or coffee, black	0
Total	45 grams

LUNCH**Location: XYZ Restaurant****Time: 12 noon**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Chapati, whole wheat (2 pieces, 6 inches each)	30
Chicken curry (2 oz, 60 g)	0
Dahl (1 cup, 125 mL)	15
Green salad with low fat dressing (1 tsp, 5 mL)	0
Fresh fruit salad (1/2 cup, 125 mL)	15
Chai tea – no sugar (with low fat milk, 1/2 cup, 125 mL)	6
Total	66 grams

AFTERNOON SNACK**Location: At work****Time: 3 p.m.**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Low-fat plain yogurt (3/4 cup, 175 mL)	15
Blueberries (1/2 cup, 125 mL)	9
Total	24 grams

DINNER**Location: At WXY Restaurant****Time: 6 p.m.**

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Rice, cooked basmati (2/3 cup, 150 mL)	30
Dahl (1 cup, 125 mL)	15
Lamb Masala (4 oz, 120 g)	0
Mixed vegetables (2 cups, 500 mL)	0
Chai tea – no sugar (with low fat milk, 1/2 cup, 125 mL)	6
Total	51 grams

6 Tips for healthier restaurant eating

1 Make special requests

- ☐ Ask to have your meal prepared differently. For example, ask for baked instead of fried. You can also request no sugar or fat be added to your ordered items.
- ☐ Ask for extra vegetables instead of French fries.
- ☐ Control the amount of fat you eat by asking for salad dressings, toppings, and sauces on the side.
- ☐ Ask for half portions. Resist upsizing your meal even if it seems to be a bargain! The larger the portions, the more tempted you will be to eat more than you really need.
- ☐ At Western style restaurants, resist the bread and butter at the beginning, or ask for it to be removed.

Depending on the variation among recipes, some main dishes may be higher or lower in fat content. It is best to check with the server if you want to be sure.

2 Make substitutions

Instead of having...	Substitute with...
Samosas, pakoras, vadai, kachori and puris	Salad, upma, papad
French fries	A salad or portion of vegetables
Parathas, puri, white rice, fried rice, fried potato	Whole grain roti, chapati, or breads, basmati rice, brown rice (when available)
Creamy salad dressings	A low-fat dressing such as raita or lemon juice
Coconut or cream soups	Broth based or vegetable soups
High-salt, high-fat meats like pork ribs, chicken wings, sausages, wieners, and processed luncheon meats	Lean meats, poultry without the skin, fish, eggs, low-fat cheese and paneer, tofu, soy products, legumes (such as lentils, chickpeas, beans)
Sauces with high sodium (salt) content, such as certain chutneys	Low-sodium options
High-fat desserts such as mithai, jalebi, laddoo, kheer	Fruit, low fat yogurt, low fat lassi, latte or cappuccino with low fat milk

3 Check the cooking method

- ☐ Look for healthier cooking methods on the menu: baked, steamed, roasted, braised, broiled, grilled, or cooked in a tandoor.
- ☐ Ask if the chef can substitute oil for ghee, bake instead of fry, or reduce the amount of oil or salt, leaner pieces of meat, toasted poppadoms or unbuttered naan.
- ☐ If a menu item is unfamiliar to you, ask your server about its ingredients and method of cooking.

4 Choose healthier beverages

- ☐ Ask for water, low-fat milk, sugar-free or diet drinks, clear tea, or beverages such as herbal tea or black coffee without added sugar, honey or syrups.
- ☐ Too much alcohol with a meal can make your blood glucose levels either too high or too low. Talk to your healthcare team about whether it is safe to drink alcohol, and how much.

5 Make conscious choices at the buffet

- ☐ Walk around the buffet table and see what foods are offered. Note which foods appeal to you and which ones you can live without.
- ☐ Go through the buffet line only once for each course. If the buffet is too much temptation, order from the menu instead, if available.
- ☐ Use the *Plate Method* to guide you.
- ☐ If you like variety, take small amounts of each food you choose. Or, eat the amount you would eat at a regular restaurant. Have one appetizer, such as a salad, one main course, and look for a healthy dessert option.

6 Pace yourself

- ☐ Take your time to savour every bite and take pleasure in the meal experience.
- ☐ Stop when you feel full and satisfied. Your brain takes about 20 minutes to realize that your stomach is full.
- ☐ Drink water to help avoid overeating.

BREAKFAST

Location:

Time:

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Total	

MORNING SNACK

Location:

Time:

Food	Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)
Total	

LUNCH

Location:

Time:

Food

Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total

AFTERNOON SNACK

Location:

Time:

Food

Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total

DINNER

Location:

Time:

Food

Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total

EVENING SNACK

Location:

Time:

Food

Grams of carbohydrates (approx.)

Total



Glossary

Blood glucose

Blood glucose is the amount of glucose (sugar) present in the blood.

Carbohydrate

Carbohydrate is one of the three main nutrients found in food. Starches, fruit, milk products, and some vegetables have carbohydrates. Your body needs carbohydrates for energy. Your body breaks them down into a sugar called glucose.

**DIABETES
CANADA**

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Diabetes Canada is making the invisible epidemic of diabetes visible and urgent. Close to 11.5 million Canadians have diabetes or prediabetes. Now is the time to End Diabetes - its health impacts as well as the blame, shame and misinformation associated with it. Diabetes Canada partners with Canadians to End Diabetes through education and support services, resources for health-care professionals, advocacy to governments, schools and workplaces, and, funding research to improve treatments and find a cure.

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