**Diabetes Meal Planning**

[**Counting carbs**](https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/eat-well/meal-plan-method.html#count)**and the**[**plate method**](https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/eat-well/meal-plan-method.html#plate) are two common tools that can help you plan meals. A meal plan is your guide for when, what, and how much to eat to get the nutrition you need while keeping your blood sugar levels in your target range. A good meal plan will also: **Include more non starchy vegetables, such as broccoli, spinach, and green beans. Include fewer added sugars and refined grains, such as white bread, rice, and pasta with less than 2 grams of**[**fiber**](https://medlineplus.gov/dietaryfiber.html)**per serving. Focus on whole foods instead of highly**[**processed foods**](https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/processed-foods/)**as much as possible.**

Carbohydrates in the food you eat raise your blood sugar levels. For example, drinking fruit juice raises blood sugar faster than eating whole fruit. You’ll want to plan for regular, balanced meals to avoid high or [low blood sugar](https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/basics/low-blood-sugar.html) levels. Eating about the same amount of carbs at each meal can be helpful. Counting carbs and using the plate method are two common tools that can make planning meals easier too.

**Counting Carbs**. Keeping track of how many carbs you eat and setting a limit for each meal can help keep your blood sugar levels in your target range.

**The Plate Method.** Start with a 9-inch dinner plate.  **Fill half** with non-starchy vegetables, such as salad, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and carrots. **Fill one quarter** with a lean protein, such as chicken, turkey, beans, tofu, or eggs. **Fill one quarter** with carb foods. Foods that are higher in carbs include grains, starchy vegetables (such as potatoes and peas), rice, pasta, beans, fruit, and yogurt. A cup of milk also counts as a carb food. Then choose water or a low-calorie drink such as unsweetened iced tea to go with your meal.

