Healthy eating is important to everyone but is even more important if you have diabetes. This is because some foods that you eat will affect your blood glucose levels.

You should be referred to the dietitian for individual dietary advice tailored to meet your own needs. To get you started, this information sheet provides you with some of the basics of healthy eating.

**What Is Healthy Eating?**

**1. Eat regularly**

Have 3 meals a day. For example, breakfast, lunch and evening meal. This will help keep your blood glucose levels steady and control your appetite.

If you need to eat between meals to control your blood glucose levels then this should be limited to healthy foods such as fruit, small pot yoghurt or a plain biscuit.

**2. Include a starchy carbohydrate food at each meal**

These include potatoes, pasta, rice, bread or breakfast cereal. High-fibre varieties are best. Have a look at the table below for more information.

The amount of carbohydrates you eat will affect your blood glucose levels. The dietician will discuss individual portion sizes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Starchy Carbohydrate to limit</th>
<th>Starchy Carbohydrates to choose instead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar or honey-coated breakfast cereals, for example, Frosties, Coco Pops, sweetened muesli, sugary cereal bars</td>
<td>Wholegrain breakfast cereal, for example, Weetabix, unsweetened muesli, Shredded Wheat, Branflakes, porridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried Chips, Instant Mash, Roast Potatoes</td>
<td>Boiled Potatoes, New potatoes, Sweet Potato, Baked Potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried rice, Naan breads, cheesy pasta dishes</td>
<td>Basmati rice, pasta, chapatti</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White bread or rolls</td>
<td>Whole grain, granary, seeded bread or rolls</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preferred foods in the right hand column should still be eaten in **moderation**.
3. Eat less sugar
Too much sugar and foods high in sugar can cause the blood glucose to rise.

It is best to replace these with **lower sugar** and **sugar free** foods instead. See the table below for examples.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods High in Sugar</th>
<th>Choose Foods Lower In Sugar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sugar, glucose, glucose syrup, dextrose, sucrose, icing sugar, light spoon, half spoon</td>
<td>Artificial sweeteners, for example, Canderel, Sweetex, Hermesetas, Splenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet squash and fizzy drinks, for example, Ribena, Lucozade, cola, lemonade, drinking chocolate</td>
<td>Diet, low calorie, sugar-free squash and fizzy drinks, for example, Robinsons Special R, Diet Coke, Pepsi Max, tea, coffee, low calorie chocolate drinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweets, for example, chocolate, toffee, fudge, tablet, mints, chocolate covered and cream filled biscuits, cakes, marzipan</td>
<td>Plain biscuit, small chocolate covered wafer biscuit, small crumpet, pancake or slice of fruit/malt loaf, oatcake or cracker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugar-coated or honey-coated breakfast cereal, for example, Frosties, Sugar Puffs, Crunchy Nut cereals</td>
<td>Unsweetened breakfast cereal, for example, Porridge, Weetabix, Branflakes, Allbran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet pudding, for example, crumble, tarts, tinned fruit in syrup</td>
<td>Fresh or dried fruit, Diet or light yoghurt, sugar-free jelly, tinned fruit in natural juice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marmalade, jam, treacle, syrup</td>
<td>Reduced sugar marmalade, jam or thin scraping or ordinary jam, marmalade or honey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preferred foods in the right hand column should still be eaten in **moderation**.
4. Eat less fried and fatty foods
High fat diets are linked to heart disease and reducing your fat intake will help you lose weight.

See the table below for information on how to reduce your fat intake.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foods High in Fat</th>
<th>Choose Foods Lower in Fat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Butter, Margarine, oil, lard, dripping</td>
<td>Low fat spread and oils made from unsaturated oils such as olive oil, vegetable oil, corn oil, monounsaturated spreads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fried foods</td>
<td>Grill, poach, boil, microwave or oven bake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>Potatoes – boiled, steamed or baked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pies, pastries, sausage rolls, fatty meat</td>
<td>Lean cuts of meat, fish and chicken without the skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creamy sauces and dressings</td>
<td>Tomato based sauces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cream, mayonnaise, salad cream, full fat yoghurt, full fat milk</td>
<td>Low fat natural yoghurt, low fat fromage frais, semi skimmed or skimmed milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full fat cheese</td>
<td>Reduced fat varieties of cheese, Lower fat cheese such as Edam, gouda, cottage cheese, grate or slice cheese thinly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crisps, savoury snacks, nuts</td>
<td>Low fat, unsalted crisps or small packet corn snacks, unsalted nuts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The preferred foods in the right hand column should still be eaten in moderation.
5. Eat fruit and vegetables – 5 portions a day
This will benefit your health and protect your heart.

1 portion = 1 medium fruit e.g apple, orange, pear
1 small banana
2 small fruits e.g – kiwis, satsumas or plums
2 tablespoons of vegetables

All fruit and veg are suitable and they can be fresh, frozen or tinned in natural juice.
Try to have vegetables with your evening meal. Spread your fruit throughout the day.

6. Include oily fish
Oily fish contains a type of fat called omega 3, which helps protect against heart disease. You should try to have oily fish in your diet at least once a week. Examples are sardines, pilchards, salmon, mackerel, fresh tuna, herring.

7. Eat less salt
Too much salt can raise your blood pressure which can lead to stroke and heart disease.

- Avoid adding salt at the table.
- Use as little salt as possible in cooking.
- Use herbs and spices to flavour food instead.
- Avoid processed foods, tinned, packed foods, salty meats.
- Do not use salt substitutes like LoSalt.

8. Healthy Weight
Body weight and diabetes are closely linked. If you are overweight it is harder for your body to use insulin properly. Losing small amounts of weight can help you to control your blood glucose levels.

A healthy weight will also help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke and control your blood pressure.

Aim for a realistic weight loss (1-2lbs each week). It is better to lose a small amount of weight and keep it off, than to lose a lot of weight and regain it.

9. Portion Sizes
As well as looking at the types of food you eat it is important to consider your portion sizes, particularly if you are trying to lose weight.

If you are trying to maintain your weight

Try to divide your plate into some starchy carbohydrate foods, vegetables and lean meat, fish, beans or alternatives.

You may need to change the proportions of food on your plate. As a first step you can use your plate as a guide,
If you are trying to lose weight

Eating less fatty foods will help you lose weight therefore have a smaller amount of lean meat, fish, beans or alternatives. Try to fill half your plate with vegetables and a smaller amount of starchy carbohydrate food.

10. Limit your alcohol intake

Most people with diabetes can enjoy an occasional alcoholic drink.

The safe amounts of alcohol for people with diabetes and the general population are exactly the same.

Men and Women are advised not to drink more than 14 units per week. Spreading your drinking over three days or more if you drink as much as 14 units per week.

Alcohol is high in energy and may cause weight gain therefore sensible drinking is essential.

There may be some precautions you should take depending on how your diabetes is treated. See the NHS Lanarkshire leaflet Alcohol and Your Diabetes available from your diabetes team.

12. Maintain an active lifestyle

Exercise helps improve your general health and your diabetes control.

See the NHS Lanarkshire Leaflet Exercise and Your Diabetes available from your diabetes team.

13. Avoid foods labelled “diabetic” or “suitable for diabetics”

There is no need to buy special “diabetic” foods. They can have a laxative effect and will not help if you are trying to lose weight. Diabetic foods will still cause your blood glucose to rise.

Further Information

You should be referred to see the diabetes dietitian for further information and individual advice.

If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the NHS Lanarkshire General Enquiry Line on 0300 303 0243 or e-mail info@lanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk

For further information go to: Diabetes MCN website