

Diabetes Prevention Strategy



Nutrition

Nutrition plays a powerful role in metabolic health. The foods you eat affect how your body manages blood sugar, cholesterol, energy, and inflammation. Eating balanced meals with enough protein, fiber, and healthy fats can help keep blood sugar more stable, support a healthy weight, and reduce the risk of conditions like diabetes and heart disease.

There is no one-size-fits-all diet for improving your metabolic health. Focus on making manageable and sustainable adjustments to your diet while still eating foods you enjoy.

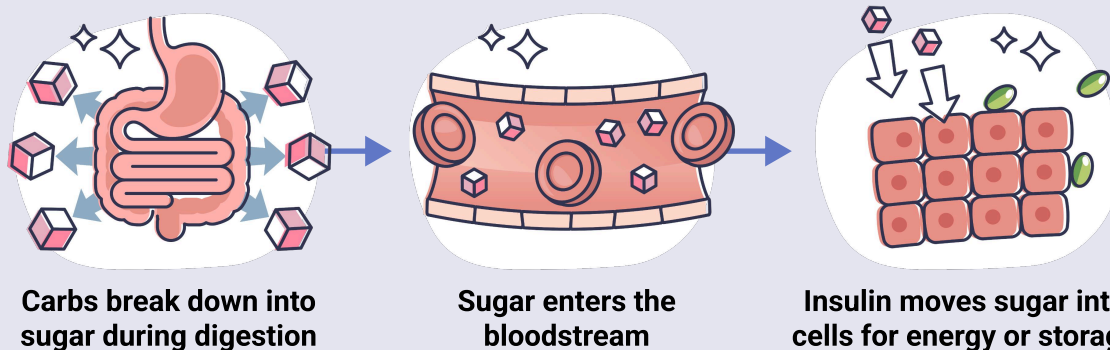


How it works

How do foods like carbohydrates (carbs) affect your blood sugar?

Glucose (or sugar) is a source of energy for the cells in your body. Our main source of glucose comes from carbs in the diet. Carbs, proteins and fats are the three key macronutrients that our bodies need to function. Carbs are found in starches (complex carbs) like bread, pasta, potatoes, rice, and beans, and other foods like fruits, milk, desserts, and sugary beverages (simple carbs).

Carbs break down into sugar during digestion and enter your bloodstream where they raise your blood sugar. Increases in blood sugar signals the release of a hormone called insulin, which helps move sugar from your blood into your cells to be used for energy or stored for later use. Insulin helps maintain blood sugar in a normal range.



Carbs break down into sugar during digestion

Sugar enters the bloodstream

Insulin moves sugar into cells for energy or storage

When blood sugar rises too quickly or too often, insulin levels stay higher. Over time, this can make your body less sensitive to insulin, a condition called insulin resistance. Insulin resistance is a key driver of prediabetes. If nothing changes, your blood sugar and insulin levels can keep rising over time and eventually turn into type 2 diabetes.

Choosing higher-fiber carbs (like beans, berries, lentils, and whole grains) and pairing them with protein or healthy fats helps blood sugar rise more slowly and keeps insulin levels steadier.

How it works (cont.)

Foods can be grouped by how much (and how quickly) they raise your blood sugar and insulin levels. **Think of it like a stoplight:**

Green foods keep your insulin and blood sugar levels steady. They're your green light for eating anytime and use as the foundation for your meals and snacks.



Green Food Examples

- Non-Starchy Vegetables: leafy greens, broccoli, peppers, zucchini, green beans
- Proteins: eggs, fish, chicken, turkey, lean meat, tofu, edamame, beans, lentils
- Fruits lower in natural sugars (whole, not juice): berries, apples, pears, oranges
- Legumes: lentils, chickpeas, black beans, kidney beans, green peas
- Healthy fats: nuts, seeds, olive oil, avocado, nut butters
- Fermented dairy products: plain Greek yogurt, cottage cheese, cheese

Yellow foods can raise your insulin and blood sugar levels, but not as drastically as red foods. Enjoying these in moderation is key, and it's good to pair with Green Foods like proteins, vegetables, or healthy fats.



Yellow Food Examples

- Whole grains: whole wheat bread, brown rice, rolled or steel-cut oats, quinoa, farro, barley, millet
- Starchy vegetables: sweet potato, corn, beets, yam, plantain, pumpkin, winter squash
- Fruits higher in natural sugars: bananas, pineapple, mango
- Unsweetened dairy with natural sugar: milk

Red foods make your insulin and blood sugar levels go up very quickly. It's best to limit these foods and always pair with protein or fiber.



Red Food Examples

- White bread, bagels, pasta, white rice, potatoes (chips, fries, mashed)
- Sugary cereals and snack foods like granola bars
- Pastries, cookies, candy, ice cream, cake
- Sugary drinks (soda, energy drinks, juice, sweet tea & coffee drinks)
- Chips and crackers made with refined flour

Adjusting your diet starts with focusing on eating more green foods, being mindful of yellow foods, and trying to limit red foods.

Pros



- Effective for both diabetes prevention and other disease prevention.
- Highly customizable to your preferences and culture.
- No special equipment or technology required.
- Benefits extend beyond blood sugar or weight (energy, mood, digestion), and can involve the whole family for shared healthy habits.

Cons



- Many people need extra support to make long-term habit changes.
- Fresh and less processed foods may be more expensive or take more time to prepare.
- Navigating food at social situations can be challenging.

There are many ways to start improving your diet!

Make small changes on your own

Talk to your care team about ways you can start improving your eating habits today. These might include simple changes like replacing sugary drinks (example: pop, juice, flavored coffee drinks) with sugar-free options (example: flavored or sparkling water, tea, or unsweetened coffee).

Try a commercially available nutrition or weight management program

Insurance and cost

Meeting with a Registered Dietitian, sometimes called Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT), can help you manage your medical conditions through nutrition and lifestyle strategies. MNT is often covered for diabetes, but coverage for prediabetes is variable. Contact your insurance to learn what is covered under your plan.

Visits with a Registered Dietitian may range from \$0-\$200 per session, depending on your insurance coverage. Many community health centers offer nutrition counseling on a sliding scale (costs are based on your income and household size).

Start tracking what you eat

Tracking your meals can be a powerful tool. Tracking what you eat increases awareness, helping you make more mindful food choices and stay accountable to your goals. People who tracked 60% of their meals over six months lost an average of 10% of their body weight in one study.

Use a mobile app like MyFitnessPal or print a food log to track your food and drink intake for 1 week.

Meet with a Registered Dietitian

Ask your doctor if they can refer you to a dietitian.

Join a national lifestyle change program like the Diabetes Prevention Program (DPP)

