American Diabetes Association. | Diet Guidelines

Best Foods for You:
Healthy Food Choices for People with Diabetes

Making Choices

Managing diabetes from day to day is up to you. A large part of it is making choices about the foods you eat. Everyone knows that vegetables are healthier than cookies. But there are also best choices within each food group.

A best choice is a food that is better for you than other foods in the same group. Best choices are lower in saturated fat, trans fat, added sugar and sodium than similar foods.

Nonstarchy Vegetables

● The best choices are fresh, frozen and canned vegetables and vegetable juices without added salt (sodium), fat or sugar such as:

- Asparagus
- Green beans
- Carrots
- Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli
- Mushrooms
- Tomatoes
- Spinach
- Onion
- Peppers

● If using canned veggies, drain and rinse them with water to wash away about 40% of the sodium.

Best Choices of Starchy Vegetables

- Acorn squash
- Butternut squash
- Green peas
- Corn
- Parsnip
- Pumpkin
- Sweet potato
- Plantain

Protein

● The best choices are plant-based protein foods, fish, chicken, and lean meats such as:

- Beans and lentils
- Nuts and seeds
- Fish and seafood
- Eggs and cheese
- Chicken, turkey, and duck without the skin
- Buffalo, rabbit and venison
- Lean cuts of beef, lamb, and pork such as chuck, rump roast, round, sirloin, T-bone steak and tenderloin

A great protein choice. Dried beans, hummus, lentils, nuts, soy-based nuggets and burgers are examples of plant based protein foods. Use them in your meals instead of beef, poultry or fish.

Fruit

● The best choices are fresh, frozen and canned fruits without added sugars such as:

- Apple
- Blueberries
- Orange
- Grapefruit
- Grapes
- Peaches
- Pear
- Plums
- Cherries

If you use canned fruit in syrup, drain and rinse the fruit with water to wash away the extra syrup.

Milk

● The best choices are milk and yogurt without added sugars such as:

- Fat-free or low-fat milk (1%)
- Unflavored soy milk
- Plain, nonfat yogurt
- light yogurt

Grains and Starchy Vegetables

● The best choices are whole grain foods, beans, peas and lentils and starchy vegetables without added fats, sugars or sodium.

Fats

Best choices or good fats are unsaturated fats like omega-3, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats:

- Avocado, olives and seeds such as flax, pumpkin or sesame
- Nuts such as almonds, brazil, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, pine, pecans, pistachios and walnuts
- Oils such as olive, canola, corn, flaxseed, safflower, soybean and sunflower
- Salad dressings and mayonnaise

Omega-3 Fatty acids are good for your Heart. When picking your fat sources, consider these foods:

Albacore tuna, mackerel, halibut, herring, salmon, sardines and trout
Flaxseeds and English walnuts
Oils such as canola, soybean, flaxseed and walnut

Best Choices of Whole Grain Foods

● Look for cereals, breads, and grains with these whole grains as the first ingredient:

- Whole wheat flour
- Whole oats/oatmeal
- Whole-grain corn/corn meal
- Popcorn
- Brown rice
- Whole-grain rye
- Whole-grain barley
- Wild rice
- Buckwheat/buckwheat flour
- Triticale
- Bulgur (cracked wheat)
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Sorghum

● Choose cereals with at least 3 grams of fiber and less than 6 grams of sugar per serving.

Best Choices of Legumes and Lentils

- Beans such as black, pinto and kidney
- Lentils and dried peas
- Fat-free refried beans and vegetarian baked beans

Go Easy

● Avoid regular soda, fruit punch, sports drinks, sweet tea, and other sugary drinks. Choose water and calorie free drinks instead.

● Cut back on high calorie snack foods and desserts such as chips, cookies, cakes and ice cream.

● Replace bad fats from fatty meats, full fat dairy, lard, butter and sour cream with good fats.

● Keep portions small.

Foods I Like