



Nutrition During Pregnancy When You Have Diabetes

Read this handout to learn how to eat well during your pregnancy to stay healthy and keep your baby safe.

If you have diabetes during pregnancy, food choices are even more important for the health of both you and your baby. Early in pregnancy (around 9 to 11 weeks), your insulin needs will decrease. You will tend to have more morning sickness and may eat less. Later in pregnancy, the hormones your body produces will increase your insulin needs.

Talk with your health care provider to review your medicine needs, and ask your dietitian to help you plan meals to keep your blood sugars at the best level for you and your baby. A dietitian familiar with diabetes in pregnancy will help you maintain safe blood sugar levels and can help you choose the right foods to nourish your growing baby.

Carbohydrates

A balanced diet for pregnancy should have about half of the calories coming from healthy carbohydrate foods. These include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, milk, and yogurt.

Carbohydrates cause a rapid rise in your blood sugar. Always eat proteins, fats, and fiber foods with your carbohydrate foods. This slows digestion, so the carbohydrates enter your bloodstream more slowly. The result is less of a rise in blood sugar after eating carbohydrates.

Avoid eating foods that are high in simple carbohydrates. These will make your blood sugars too high. They include:

- Alcohol
- Fruit juices
- Honey, sugar, sweets
- Hot chocolate, Ovaltine
- Soda pop
- Sugary cereals

Helpful Tips

Keep your blood sugar levels as close to normal as possible. This helps your body function well and helps your baby grow normally. High blood sugars can make your baby grow too big, and this can cause problems at birth.

Follow these guidelines to help keep your blood sugar stable:

- Eat 3 smaller meals and 3 snacks each day.
- Do **not** skip any meals or snacks.
- Keep your diet consistent. This means eating about the **same amount** of the **same types of foods** at the **same time** every day. A consistent diet will help your doctor prescribe the most effective insulin doses for you. And, it will help you avoid blood sugars that are too high or too low.
- Discuss food safety and foods to avoid with your dietitian or nurse. Avoid fish that is high in mercury and other toxins. You may eat fish that is on the safe list up to 3 times a week. But first, talk with your dietitian about portion sizes and what types of fish are safe to eat while you are pregnant and later, while you are breastfeeding.
- Raw fruits and vegetables contain natural fiber. Include a variety of vegetables in your diet. Count the carbohydrate in fruits, and eat them in small amounts later in the day.
- Read the nutrition labels on foods and drinks. Look at the total carbohydrate grams, and read the ingredient list to see if the food contains simple sugar or high-fructose corn syrup. Note serving sizes – a package of food may contain more than 1 serving. Your dietitian can help you understand how to read food labels.
- Include calcium-rich foods (low-fat dairy foods, fortified soy products) several times a day for your bone health. Take calcium supplements if you cannot get enough calcium from your diet.
- Take a prenatal vitamin every day.
- Limit salt and high-fat “junk” foods.

Talk with your health care provider to learn more. We are here to help you have a safe and healthy pregnancy for you and your baby.

Fluids

- Drink **at least** 8 glasses (8 ounces each) of fluids each day. That is 2 quarts, or 64 ounces. Most of this fluid should be water. Sipping water throughout the day will help you achieve this. Water helps keep blood sugars lower and is good for you and your baby.
- Limit caffeine to 1 cup or less a day.
- Limit diet drinks to 1 or less a day.

Meals and Snacks

Talk with your dietitian about your meal plan needs.

Breakfast

Pregnancy hormones have their greatest effect in the morning. This can make blood sugars harder to control in the morning. This means you should limit the amount of carbohydrates at breakfast to 30 grams (**2 servings**).

- Any carbohydrates you eat at breakfast should be whole grains such as brown rice, whole-grain breads, and whole-grain hot cereals such as steel-cut oats.
- Avoid refined sugary cereals, potatoes, fruits, and juices. Save the fruit for later in the day, to eat in small amounts.
- Avoid milk at breakfast, or have just 4 ounces ($\frac{1}{2}$ cup) or less.

Snacks

Snacks should contain 15 grams of carbohydrates (**1 serving**) plus protein, fat, and fiber.

Some good **protein** choices are:

- Eggs
- Chicken
- Nuts
- Cheese
- Seafood, fish
- Tofu
- Natural peanut butter
- Lean beef
- Soy products

Some good **fat** choices are:

- Olive oil
- Flax seeds
- Avocado
- Fish oil (from wild local salmon)
- Nuts

Lunch and Dinner

You may eat 45 to 60 grams of carbohydrates (**3 to 4 servings**) with your proteins and fats at lunch and dinner. Eat the higher amount if you are tall, or at the time of day when you are usually the most active.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC clinic staff are also available to help Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Maternal and Infant Care Center
206-598-4070
Box 356159

Labor and Delivery
206-598-4616
Box 356079

Sample Meals and Snacks

Breakfast

2 servings of carbohydrates (30 grams)

- 1 to 2 scrambled eggs
- 2 slices (1 ounce each) whole-grain toast with butter (avoid breads and peanut butter with high-fructose corn syrup – check the food label)
- 1 cup decaf coffee, non-herbal tea, or water

Morning Snack

1 serving of carbohydrates (15 grams)

- 1 to 2 ounces cheese (1 ounce of cheese is about the size of your thumb)
- 5 to 7 whole-wheat crackers

Lunch

4 servings of carbohydrates (60 grams)

- Tuna salad sandwich: 2 to 3 ounces light canned tuna with mayonnaise, lettuce or spinach leaves, tomato, and 2 slices (1 ounce each) whole-grain bread
- 1 serving fruit
- ½ cup raw carrot sticks
- 1 cup 2% milk

Afternoon Snack

1 serving of carbohydrates (15 grams)

- ½ piece of fruit or ¾ cup fresh berries
- 1 to 2 ounces nuts (about 1 handful)

Dinner

3 to 4 servings of carbohydrates (45 to 60 grams)

- 3 ounces lean meat (7% to 9% fat), grilled or baked (3 ounces of meat is about the size of the palm of your hand)
- ⅔ cup brown rice
- 1 cup steamed broccoli (optional: butter)
- 1 cup 2% milk

For a 60-gram carbohydrate meal: Add 1 fruit serving

Evening Snack

1 serving of carbohydrates (15 grams)

- 1 to 2 tablespoons of natural peanut butter on 1 slice (1 ounce) whole-grain bread

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
MEDICAL CENTER
UW Medicine

Maternal and Infant Care Center
Box 356159
1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195
206-598-4070