

Managing Type 2 Diabetes through Diet

Bring your weight and blood sugar levels close to normal ranges. This will help you prevent long term problems from diabetes.

A large number of US adults have type 2 diabetes. There are more than 18 million with this disease. This number is currently on the rise. Most people with type 2 diabetes do not have a healthy weight. More than 80% of them are overweight.

Diet is key in helping to manage type 2 diabetes. Your weight and blood sugar should be close to normal ranges. This will help prevent the long term problems that can come from diabetes.

If you are overweight and have diabetes, you should try to lose weight. This is the first step to controlling your diabetes. Weight loss can help your body use insulin better. This helps your body to control blood sugar levels. Your diet will be basically the same as the healthy heart diet. It is also like the diet that reduces the risk of certain cancers. You will need to be mindful of your calorie intake. This is needed to reach your desired weight. You will also have to restrict the sweets in your diet. Talk to your doctor before you start any weight loss program.

The ADA (American Diabetes Association) has some suggestions for the start of your weight loss program:

- Cut 500 calories from what you eat each day.
- Have a balanced diet with a mixture of nutrients.
- Limit the fats in your diet. They should be less than 30% of the calories you eat each day. Less than 10% of calories should come from “bad” fats (called “saturated fats”).
- Eat starches and sugars that take longer to digest (called “complex carbohydrates”). About 50% of calories you eat should come from these. Examples are: fresh vegetables; grains; lentils, beans, and other legumes;

whole grain breads; fresh fruits. But limit fruit juices because they have a lot of sugar.

Getting half of your calories from these starches may help you lose weight. Many of these foods are low in calories. So, you may end up taking in fewer calories. You will also increase the amount of fiber in your diet. This will help keep your bowels regular. Some studies show that fiber can help you in other ways. It may aid in controlling your blood sugar levels. Some of your calories should also come from protein. Make this no more than 12 to 20% of the calories you eat.

Another change to make in your diet is the pattern of your meals. For example, you should eat smaller and more frequent meals. Small meals with a lot of protein or certain snacks (“complex carbohydrate” snacks) are good too. These changes limit how much sugar your body breaks down at one time. This helps to control blood sugar levels.

Finally, you should get more active. Exercise and diet help you control your blood sugar. Talk to a doctor before you start an exercise plan. This is key if you have poor blood flow or heart or foot problems.

*****Authored by Johns Hopkins University and Johns Hopkins Health System*****