

Snacks

Note to the Health Care Professional: Topics in this handout are discussed in Chapter 19 of the *American Dietetic Association Guide to Diabetes Medical Nutrition Therapy and Education* (1). The Free Foods table is adapted with permission from reference 2.

When counseling clients on snacking, consider the following:

- Children with type 1 diabetes may need regular snacks to achieve adequate nutrition.
- With new medication and insulin options, many people with diabetes do not need to regularly include snacks in their meal plans.
- Because the first-phase insulin response is affected in type 2 diabetes, snacking may make glycemic control more challenging for clients.
- Client preferences should dictate whether snacks are included in their meal plans.
- Some clients may need insulin or medication changes if snacks are included or excluded.

References

1. Warshaw HS. Advanced topics in diabetes nutrition management. In: Ross TA, Boucher JL, O'Connell BS, eds. *American Dietetic Association Guide to Diabetes Medical Nutrition Therapy and Education*. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association; 2005:218-226.
2. Evert AB, Hess-Fischl A. *Pediatric Diabetes: Health Care Reference and Client Education Handouts*. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association; 2006.

Snacks



Snacking and Your Meal Plan

Some people with diabetes like to eat every few hours. Others find that they feel better when they eat just three meals a day. Talk with your registered dietitian (RD) about a meal plan that fits the way you like to eat. If you like to snack, your RD can help you plan snacks and still control your blood glucose.

Tips for Snacking

- Be sure to stay within your daily calorie level if you choose to have snacks.
- Have less food at mealtimes if you plan to snack.
- If you need help controlling your blood glucose, work with your health care team. You may need to adjust your medications or insulin.
- Some people who use insulin may need snacks, especially at times when they are physically active.

Choosing Healthy Snack Foods

- Fresh fruits and vegetables are great snack choices.
- If you like to have milk, cheese, or yogurt at snack time, choose types that are nonfat or low-fat.
- You can snack on a small portion (1 ounce) of lean meat, such as skinless chicken breast, fish, or lean beef or pork.
- Reach for a couple of unsalted nuts, such as almonds or pecans.
- Whole grain snacks are a good way to get fiber and vitamins that your body needs. Good choices are plain microwave popcorn or whole wheat crackers.
- See the Healthy Snack Choices box on the next page for more ideas.

Healthy Snack Choices

- Whole grain cereal and nonfat or low-fat milk
- Hard-cooked egg
- Fruit smoothie made with fruit and low-fat or nonfat milk or yogurt
- Peanut butter on whole wheat crackers
- ½ turkey sandwich topped with spinach and tomatoes
- Celery with a thin layer of peanut butter
- Pita bread and hummus
- Fresh fruit
- Baked corn chips and salsa or bean dip
- Dried fruit and nut mixes
- Raw vegetables with a dip made from nonfat or low-fat cottage cheese or yogurt
- Quesadilla (soft tortilla and low-fat cheese, folded and heated in the oven or microwave)

Splitting Meals into Snacks

If you want to snack, consider splitting a meal into a smaller meal plus a snack. For example, you could eat part of your dinner at the usual time, and save the other part for a snack two hours later. (See the Dinner Split chart to see how you could break one meal into a meal plus a snack.)

Note: If you use insulin and you split a meal, you may need to change how you take your insulin. Talk with your health care team.

Dinner Split

	Menu 1	Menu 2
Dinner	3 ounces baked salmon 1 medium baked potato 1 teaspoon olive oil Steamed broccoli 1 cup milk ⅓ small cantaloupe	3 ounces baked salmon 1 medium baked potato 1 teaspoon olive oil Steamed broccoli 1 cup milk ⅓ small cantaloupe
Evening Snack	None	1 cup milk (or yogurt) ⅓ small cantaloupe





Snacks and Blood Glucose

If you want to snack, you should learn how snacks affect your blood glucose. Check your blood glucose 1 to 2 hours after you eat. If your blood glucose is too high (over 180 mg/dL) after a snack, you may want to change the kinds of snack choices you make.

Smaller snacks or “free” foods may help keep your blood glucose from getting too high. You may also need a change in medication or insulin—talk to your health care team.

Snacking on “Free” Foods

Free foods have less than 20 calories and less than 5 grams of carbohydrate per serving. The Free Foods chart shows some choices.

People with diabetes can have up to three servings of “free” foods each day. These servings should be spread throughout the day, not eaten all at once.

Many sugar-free foods do **not** count as free foods in a diabetes meal plan. This is because sugar-free foods can contain more than 5 grams of carbohydrates or more than 20 calories. For example, sugar-free chocolates, caramels, cookies, cakes, and pies are **not** free foods.

Free Foods

Food	Amount
Blueberries	¼ cup
Raspberries	⅓ cup
Raw nonstarchy vegetables, such as cucumbers, green peppers, or salad greens	1 cup
Reduced-fat cheese crackers	5 crackers
Mini rice snacks	2 mini cakes
Oyster crackers	8 small crackers
Pretzels	¼ ounce
Popcorn, popped without added fat or low-fat microwave	1 cup (measured after popping)
Dill pickles	1½ medium pickles
Sweet pickles	2 slices
Sugar-free Popsicle	1 Popsicle
Sugar-free hard candy	1 piece
Sugar-free Jell-O	No limit
Sugar-free soda	No limit