

SENIORS & DIABETES – UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

Diabetes, a chronic disease in which the body cannot make or properly use insulin¹, affects millions of people everyday across the United States and throughout the world. According to the American Diabetes Association, approximately 18.3% (8.6 million) of Americans age 60 and older have diabetes.²

At Carefocus Companion Services, we care about the health and safety of you and your loved ones. We also understand the confusion and concerns that can come along with handling diabetes. Using this list of frequently asked questions can help assist in the everyday management of diabetes.



1. What are the dangers associated with diabetes?

If not carefully controlled, diabetes can affect many aspects of one's life, including serious damage to vision, the kidneys, nerves, heart, gums, and teeth.³ Diabetes is the leading cause of end-stage kidney disease, accounting for 43% of new cases. People with diabetes are more prone to heart attacks and/or strokes and may also develop numbness, or neuropathy, in their arms and legs which could potentially require amputation if left untreated.⁴

2. Why is a healthy diet so important to diabetes management?

With proper care and treatment, including a healthy diet, the risk of microvascular (eye, kidney, or nerve) complications may decrease by 25%. Making healthy food choices is very important to help keep your blood sugar level under control. This, in combination with keeping your blood pressure and cholesterol under control is the best defense against serious complications of diabetes, especially heart disease and stroke.⁴

3. Do people with diabetes need to eat special foods?

People with diabetes don't need to eat special foods; just ones that are low in fat, salt, and sugar and high in fiber, such as beans, fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. A healthy diabetic diet should include a wide assortment of fruits, vegetables, and proteins.¹

4. What factors are considered when designing a healthy meal plan?

A Physician or Dietitian (as recommended by a Physician) will consider several things when designing a meal plan for someone with diabetes, including: the patient's weight, daily physical activity, blood glucose levels, and any medications that he or she may be taking.¹

5. What is an exchange system?

The American Dietetics Association (ADA) created the exchange system to simplify calorie and carbohydrate counting diets. These groups of similar categories or portions of foods are called exchanges.³

6. How does an exchange system work?

In the exchange system, foods are grouped into basic types (starches, fruits, milk, meat, etc). Foods in any exchange category are approximately equal to each other. For example, 1 small apple = 1 small orange = 1 medium peach. Any of these would constitute 1 exchange of fruit (each one contains about 15 grams of carbohydrates, up to 3 grams of protein, 0-1 gram of fat, and about 80 calories). Counting exchanges can be very easy compared to counting individual calories or carbohydrates.⁵

7. What are "Combination Foods"?

"Combination Foods" are foods that incorporate more than one exchange. Some examples are: Pizza and Pot Pie³

8. What are "Free Foods"?

"Free Foods" do not count toward exchanges because they contain less than 20 calories per serving and less than 5 grams of carbohydrates, and should be limited to 3 per day. Some examples are: diet soda, some fruits and vegetables, condiments, etc.³

9. What are the benefits of calorie-counting and carbohydrate-counting diets?

Both the calorie-counting and carbohydrate-counting methods of tracking what a diabetic eats have identical benefits. Both diets allow for a wide variety and quantity of enjoyable food throughout the day. The exchanges can be modified slightly or moved during the day to a different meal to provide flexibility. For instance, fruit can be skipped at breakfast and be added at lunch.³

10. Why is exercise important to diabetes management?

Exercise is very important for people with diabetes. It is good for your heart and lungs, increases energy, helps keep weight down, and insulin working efficiently. Taking part in a regular fitness program has been shown to help reduce blood sugar levels in older people whose levels are high.¹ *(Please consult with your Physician prior to beginning any exercise regimen).*



This information is not meant as a substitute for professional medical or nutritional advice and consultation. When differences exist between the information here and information given to you by your healthcare provider(s), you should follow the advice of your healthcare provider(s). Any additional information or clarification needed should be sought from the Physician, Practitioner, Speech Pathologist, or Nutritionist who is familiar with the individual's health and medical conditions.



SENIORS & DIABETES – HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

As we age, changes in our environment and physical abilities can contribute to unique diabetes management issues. Without proper nutrition, diabetes can cause serious health problems. Use the list below to find examples of foods to eat and foods to avoid when on a diabetic diet.



Foods to Eat

- ▶ Foods that are high in fiber, fruits, vegetables, protein, and whole grains.³
- ▶ Examples of different foods to include in a diabetic diet are (but not limited to):
 - ▶ Starches such as toast with jam, hamburger buns, pretzels, baked potato, popcorn, bread, cereal, pasta, rice, or crackers.⁴
 - ▶ Meat or proteins such as egg substitute, chicken, steak or sirloin, dried beans, and soy products like veggie burgers.⁴
 - ▶ Fruits can be fresh or canned and include bananas, raspberries, apples, strawberries, and apple juice.⁴
 - ▶ Vegetables such as tomatoes, red onions, broccoli, cauliflower, or corn.⁴
 - ▶ Dairy products such as yogurts, milk products, and fat-free ice cream or frozen yogurt.⁴
 - ▶ Free foods or treats should be limited and include foods such as sugar-free popsicles, diet soda, and sugar-free hot cocoa mix to satisfy a “sweet tooth”.⁶
- ▶ Drink at least 8 to 10 glasses of water a day.⁷
- ▶ Olive oil and peanut oil are good fats to include in diets.⁷

Foods to Avoid

- ▶ Avoid purchasing pre-packaged or processed foods that are usually high in salts, fat, and sugar.⁸
- ▶ Avoid smoking and alcoholic beverages.⁷
- ▶ Examples of different foods to avoid in a diabetic diet include (but are not limited to):⁷
 - ▶ White flour
 - ▶ White sugar
 - ▶ Sweets and candies
 - ▶ Glucose
 - ▶ Chocolates
 - ▶ Fried foods
 - ▶ Concentrated dairy products that are high in sugar or carbohydrates such as half and half and sour cream.
 - ▶ High-fat salad toppings such as dressings, croutons, and cheeses

¹ “Diabetes.” NIHSeniorHealth.gov. 09 Dec. 2004. 10 Feb. 2009 <<http://nihseniorhealth.gov/diabetes/toc.html>>

² Dlife.com. 30 June. 2008. LifeMed Media, Inc. 10 Feb. 2009 <http://www.dlife.com/dlife/do.showContent/daily_living/seniors/>

³ Maxim Healthcare Services. Nutrition and Dietary Guide for Supporting Individuals with Nutritional & Mealtime Challenges. February 2008

⁴ “Diabetes - Fact Sheet.” NCAO.org. The Diabetes A1C Initiative (TM). March 2003. 10 Feb. 2009. <<http://www.ncoa.org/content.cfm?sectionID=109&detail=270>>

⁵ MayoClinic.com. Your diabetes diet: Exchange lists. 3 May, 2008. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER). 2 March, 2009. <<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/diabetes-diet/DA00077>>

⁶ Sejal, Dave, MS,RD/LD, CDE. “Add ‘Free’dom to Your Diabetes Meal Plan”. April, 2008. 2 March, 2009. <http://www.healthcastle.com/diabetes_free_foods.shtml>

⁷ Jas, Ashi. “Diabetes- Food to Eat And Avoid”. 3 March 2009. <<http://ezinearticles.com/?Diabetes---Foods-To-Eat-And-Avoid&tid=442464>>.

⁸ “The ABCs of Diabetes Diet Control.” DiabeticSeniors.com. 10 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.diabeticseniors.com/a/The+ABCs+of+Diabetes+Diet+Control>>

For more information or to discuss recommendations on healthy eating and necessary care for your loved one, contact CareFocus Companion Services today!

