

Information for patients

Reducing your carbohydrate intake

You are being given this leaflet because you may benefit from reducing your carbohydrate intake – this could be because your body is beginning to have difficulty processing it (impaired glucose tolerance, or pre-diabetes), you have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, are interested in losing weight and/or feeling healthier.

Important: If you are on medication for diabetes such as insulin or gliclazide you must speak to your doctor if you are planning on making big changes to your carbohydrate intake.

What are carbohydrates?

The main carbohydrates in our diets are:

- **Sugary foods and drinks:** biscuits, sweets, cakes, chocolate, full sugar drinks and juices.
- **Starchy carbohydrates:** Potatoes, rice, chapati, bread, pasta, chips, pastry, plantain, yam, noodles.



Although starchy carbohydrates are a more complex form – commonly referred to as ‘slow release’, they are still broken down into sugar in our bodies even though they don’t taste sweet. This applies to both white and wholemeal versions, although the wholemeal is a more nutritious choice overall as it contains vitamins and fibre.

Carbohydrates affect your blood sugar and lowering them can hugely improve your diabetes control.

First step ideas...

1. Reduce highly processed foods, sugary drinks, snacks and takeaways and instead try to cook fresh whole foods that are much more nutritious.
2. Cut out sugary snacks – biscuits, cakes, sweets, pizza and sugary drinks and juices. These cause sugar ‘spikes’ and then ‘crashes’ that leave you craving more. Try nuts or Greek yogurt with a handful of berries.





3. Eat healthy proteins – non-processed meat, chicken, fish (especially oily fish such as mackerel, sardines and salmon), eggs, nuts and yogurt are tasty and keep you fuller than carbohydrate foods.
4. Try filling half of your plate with green leafy veg such as broccoli, okra, peas or spinach to start with, the increase in fibre will give you much steadier energy levels. Be creative – you could have 1 quarter salad and 1 quarter vegetable curry!
5. Be careful with fruit, although it contains vitamins it is also high in sugar (particularly tropical fruits). Be sure to have 1 portion at a time (1 portion = 1 handful or 1 piece) and try not to have more than 2-3 portions per day.

A diet high in vegetables, fruit, pulses, wholegrain cereals, nuts and seeds with lean proteins such as fish, chicken and eggs in moderation is known as the Mediterranean diet and is particularly good for heart health and Type 2 diabetes control.

Top tips:

- ✓ Try to be active every day – whether it is going for a walk with a friend or getting off the bus one stop earlier.
- ✓ If there is a trigger for overeating – such as boredom or stress, try to distract yourself. It could be a phone-call, a walk or taking up a new hobby such as knitting or painting!
- ✓ Be prepared – try to plan your meals and snacks at the beginning of the week, so that if you are tired after work, you're less likely to go back to old habits.
- ✓ Enjoy your meals, try new recipes, share with friends and take time to eat in a peaceful environment.

Websites such as Diabetes UK, British Heart Foundation and Change 4 Life have some excellent recipe ideas to give you inspiration in the kitchen.

Where shall I start?



Choose some of the tips that may be the easiest for you to work on – and take it one step at a time.

The Real Food Real Health Project run 8 week courses or drop in sessions designed to empower you to make a change.

Visit your GP practice website and search 'Real Food Real Health' to fill in an application form or find out more!

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