

What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a condition where there is too much sugar in the blood. In the body there is a hormone called insulin that manages the blood sugar. Insulin is made in the pancreas, it acts to enable sugar to be used for energy. When there is little or no insulin sugar cannot be used for energy, so blood sugars remain high - this is diabetes.

There are two types of diabetes:

Type 1:

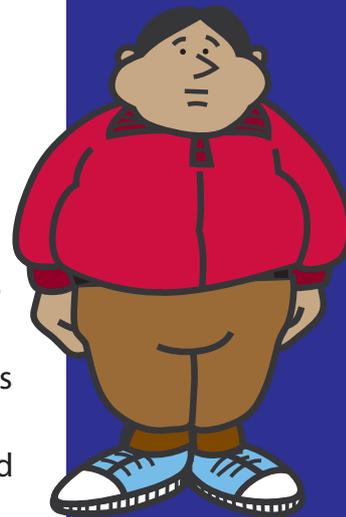
This results when the pancreas stops producing insulin. In this situation lifelong insulin injections are needed.

Type 2:

This type of diabetes occurs due to a lack of insulin production in the body but is more commonly due to the body's inability to use its own insulin properly.

This is known as ***insulin resistance***.

Insulin resistance commonly occurs in overweight individuals. This is because excess weight, particularly around the tummy, makes it difficult for the body to use its own insulin effectively. In this instance weight loss is recommended. However, this is not always enough and tablets, insulin or both may be necessary to help control blood sugar levels.



Aim of Diabetes Treatment

The aim of diabetes treatment is to achieve good blood sugar control *i.e. blood sugars between 4-7 mmols/litre before meals*. It has been shown that good diabetes control reduces your chances of developing future diabetes related complications.

Initially, it may take some time for good control to be achieved.

Diet for Diabetes

Traditionally the diabetes diet advised 'the avoidance of sugar' to achieve good diabetes control. However, avoiding sugar, but eating a diet high in fat can lead to weight gain which makes diabetes control poor. Advice has now changed to encourage a low fat, low sugar diet with a good balance of foods.

Traditionally the Asian diet was low in fat and sugar and, therefore, very healthy. However people moving from East Africa and India to the U.K. approximately two decades ago have changed their diet. It has now become higher in both fat and sugar.

In addition, we are now a lot less active than we used to be. Previously we did not use cars to travel, we would walk. We did not have vacuum cleaners, we would sweep. We did not have washing machines, clothes were hand washed. All of these tasks required more energy and hence kept us more active.

As a consequence of a higher fat diet and being less active we as a nation are becoming overweight and the incidence of diabetes has increased. It is important that if you are overweight you try to lose weight.

(Information on how to try and lose weight can be found further on in the booklet)

FACT:

Type 2 diabetes is more commonly observed in the Asian population. Current data suggests 1 in 5 middle aged Asian people have Type 2 Diabetes.

Healthy Eating for the Asian Community...



...try to eat a balanced diet and maintain a healthy weight!

Chapattis, Rice and other Cereals

Include 1 or more portions at each meal

1 portion is...

1 slice of bread/1 small roll/1 medium chapatti/30g breakfast cereal (unsweetened varieties)/2 new potatoes or half medium potato/2 tablespoons of cooked rice or pasta/1 small naan/1 pitta bread/3 crackers/2 plain biscuits

These foods should form the main part of each meal. They are healthy until oil, butter, ghee or margarine are added.

Your blood sugars will be better controlled if you eat little and often throughout the day, rather than three large meals.

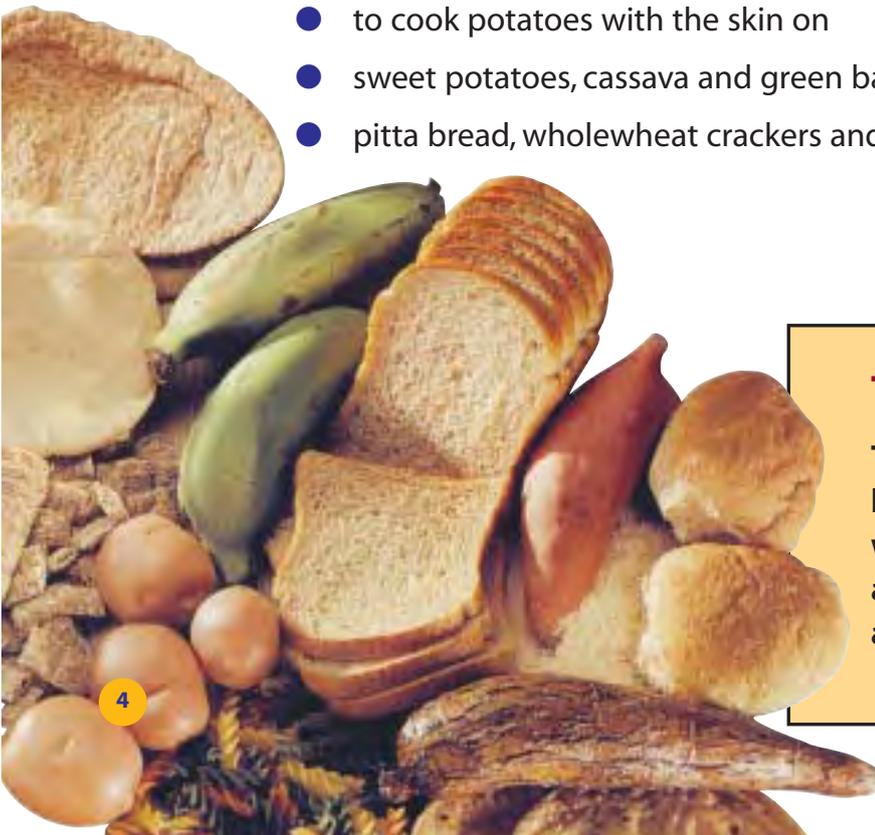
To avoid weight gain take smaller quantities of these foods..

Try...

- to make chapattis with less oil/ghee and avoid spreading butter/ghee on them
- spreading margarine or butter thinly on bread
- to avoid adding butter/margarine when cooking rice
- cereals that are not sugar/honey coated, e.g. Weetabix, Shredded Wheat, Fruitabix, Cornflakes, Rice Krispies
- to cook potatoes with the skin on
- sweet potatoes, cassava and green bananas as these are good too
- pitta bread, wholewheat crackers and crispbread

TIP:

Try making chapattis with boiling water or some warm milk instead of oil, and serve just before you are ready to eat.



Fatty Foods

Having diabetes increases the chances of developing heart problems so it is important to follow a low fat diet to keep your heart healthy and to help you to lose weight if necessary.

Reducing the fat intake is the most important part of your diet.

These foods are high energy (kcal) and will contribute to weight gain.

Where possible...

- Use a mono or polyunsaturated spread instead of butter, ghee or other vegetable margarines. Choose "light" versions as these are low in fat and use sparingly
- Use less oil in cooking. Even if you use olive, sunflower, corn or vegetable oil they are all high in fat (*See tip at bottom of the page*)
- Try to use low fat cooking methods e.g. grilling, steaming, boiling, dry roasting, tandoori
- Cut down on deep fried foods, e.g. samosas, bhajias, pakoras, bhatora, parotha, puri, chips
- Limit high fat savoury snacks, e.g. bombay mix, ganthia, chevda, sev, crisps, fried peanuts and cashew nuts
- Keep fish and chips, pizzas, pastries and other fried take-away foods to a minimum

TIP:

Measure the amount of oil you use in cooking.

Try using 1 tablespoon of oil for a family of four.



Sugary Foods

Nowadays many ready made foods contain sugar e.g, tomato ketchup, baked beans and pasta sauce, so it is difficult to avoid sugar completely. Some foods are easier for the body to digest (breakdown) than others and this influences high and low blood sugars.

Sugar in drinks will quickly swing blood sugars high as drinks do not need digesting. However foods containing sugar (e.g. fruit) take time to digest and sugar is released into the bloodstream slowly.

It is important to limit sugar intake if you are trying to lose weight and also achieve good blood sugar control

- Avoid sugary drinks e.g Coca Cola, Lucozade, Ribena. Instead, choose low calorie or sugar free drinks, e.g. diet fizzy drinks, low calorie or no added sugar squash. If you like fruit juice choose unsweetened versions and have only a small glass alongside a meal
- Take hot drinks without sugar or use a sweetener to improve taste, e.g. Canderel, Hermesetas, Sweetex
- Cut down on cakes and biscuits. If you feel tempted choose plain low sugar versions, e.g. Rich Tea, Morning Coffee, plain teacakes, scones, crumpets
- Eat indian sweets on special occasions only e.g. - burfi, jellabi, laddu, penda, gulab jaman. These are high in both fat and sugar
- Limit use of gur/jaggery in cooking
- Use light evaporated milk instead of evaporated or condensed milk
- Choose low sugar or no added sugar jam or marmalade

TIP:

Avoid 'special diabetic' foods - choose low sugar products from the supermarket instead.



Fruit and Vegetables

Aim for 5 or more servings each day

1 serving = 1 apple, 1 banana, a medium handful of grapes/ strawberries/2 satsumas or plums, 1 small glass of unsweetened fruit juice, 2 tablespoons of vegetable curry, or a small bowl of salad.

These provide important vitamins, minerals and also soluble fibre. The fibre helps with your blood sugar control.

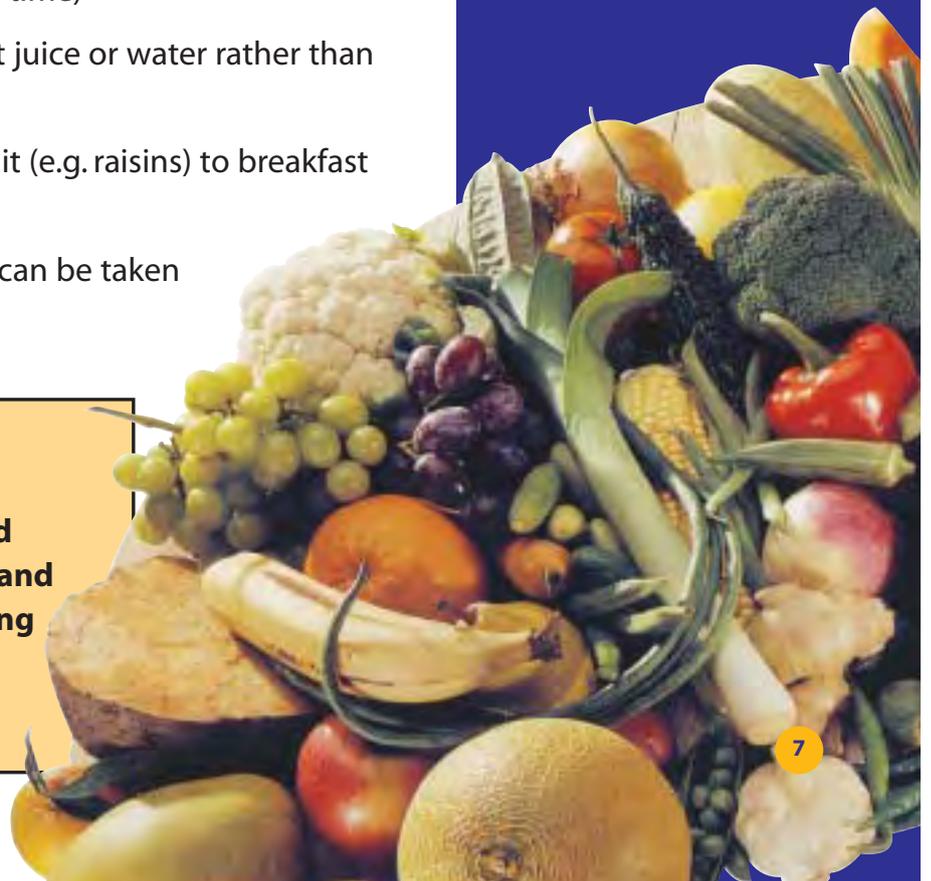
Steaming or microwaving vegetables retains goodness.

To increase your fruit and vegetable intake:

- Add extra grated/chopped vegetables and fruit to raitas
- Add vegetables to meat curries
- Have a side salad with your main meal
- Try raw vegetables to accompany in-between meal snacks, e.g. carrot, cherry tomatoes, cucumber
- Eat fruit as a pudding or snack. All fruit is allowed, including bananas, mangoes (a small bowl full), and grapes (a handful at a time)
- Eat tinned fruit, but in fruit juice or water rather than syrup
- Add fresh fruit or dried fruit (e.g. raisins) to breakfast cereals
- A small glass of fruit juice can be taken with food

TIP:

Choose fresh, frozen and tinned varieties of fruit and vegetables. When cooking use less oil, butter, ghee and margarine.



Meat, Fish, Pulses and Dahl

Aim for 2 servings each day

1 serving = 75g cooked meat/100g cooked fish or 125g cooked peas, beans, lentils or dahl.
All of these are good sources of protein.

Peas, beans, lentils and dahl contain soluble fibre. This helps your diabetes control.

When cooking try to use low fat cooking methods - grill/steam/boil/dry roast (tandoori)/microwave.

- Use a vegetable based oil e.g. sunflower/olive oil rather than ghee or butter when cooking. Measure and gradually try to reduce the amount of oil you use
- Use a non-stick pan to reduce the amount of oil needed
- To prevent food from sticking, use a lower heat. This will enable you to use less oil when you start cooking
- Fry spices, pour off any extra oil and continue cooking. Drain off any oil floating on the curry
- Choose all peas, beans, lentils and dahls more often such as chick peas, moong, blackeye and kidney beans, as these are low in fat and high in fibre
- Remove skin from chicken before cooking, as this is where the fat is
- Use lean meat when making kebabs and grill meat where possible
- To make keema, heat the mince first. This will help the fat to separate from the mince. Remove the fat and continue to cook
- Eat fish more often, particularly oily fish (e.g. sardines, mackerel, herring, salmon) and eat fried fish or fish in batter less often

TIP:

When you use less fat in cooking you may find the taste changes. Try adding more spices e.g. ginger, garlic, chillies or other spices to help improve taste. These are fine to include as part of a healthy eating plan.



Milk and Dairy Products

Aim for 3 servings day

1 serving = 200ml / 1 pint milk, 25g hard cheese,
1 small pot of yogurt or 1 glass of lassi

These provide protein and calcium to keep bones and teeth healthy.

These foods are high in fat, therefore, try to:

- Use semi skimmed milk or skimmed milk
- Use low fat yogurt
- Use low fat evaporated milk
- Use semi-skimmed milk to make yogurt
- Use reduced fat cheese or lower fat alternatives, like Edam, cottage cheese, curd cheese

TIP:

Limit paneer as this is a full fat cheese.

Try to make paneer using semi skimmed milk.



Salt

Most of us eat more salt than we need. A high intake of salt can raise blood pressure, particularly if you are overweight or if it runs in your family.

If you have high blood pressure, it is recommended your total daily intake should be no more than half a teaspoon.

If your blood pressure is normal it is still important to control your salt intake as people with diabetes are more at risk of developing high blood pressure.

Try to...

- Reduce salt in cooking, i.e. in curry, rice, salad, lassi
- Avoid adding salt at the table
- Use different flavours as an alternative to salt, e.g. black pepper, mixed spices, lemon juice, garlic, chilli
- Cut down on foods such as cheese, crisps, sev, chevda, salted nuts, as these are high in salt
- Eat fresh foods and decrease packet and tinned foods

Salt substitutes will not help you to lose the taste for salt and are not recommended.

A recent study has shown that eating more fruit and vegetables can help to lower blood pressure.



TIP:

Watch out for hidden salt i.e. in pickles, ready mixed spices, ready marinated meat or fish, tinned beans or peas.

Alcohol

If your diabetes is treated with certain tablets or insulin, alcohol can cause your blood sugars to fall too low. This is known as hypoglycaemia.

This can happen 4-6 hours after taking alcohol, so it is important to take regular snacks and meals to prevent this from occurring.

Unless advised otherwise an occasional drink will do no harm if taken just before or with food.

NOTE: Never drink on an empty stomach and never drink and drive.

- Avoid low sugar "Diabetic" or "Diet" extra strength lager often advertised as "low in sugar" or "diet pils" as they contain more alcohol than ordinary varieties. They are also higher in energy (kcal)
- If you drink beer or lager, choose ordinary ones, preferably with an alcohol content of less than 5%
- Try alternating non-alcoholic sugar-free drinks with alcohol
- Use low calorie or sugar free mixers with spirits or aperitifs, e.g. low calorie lemonade, slimline tonic, mineral water
- If you drink wine or sherry, choose medium/dry varieties, when you can, although the occasional sweet drink is fine
- Keep within sensible limits to avoid damaging your health. Recommendations are a maximum of 3 units of alcohol for a man and 2 units for a woman per day
- Alcohol may cause unpleasant "flushing" in some people who are taking diabetic tablets

TIP:

Alcohol contains a lot of energy (kcal) so if you are trying to lose weight, limit your intake.



Eating Out

Eating out should be pleasurable for you as well as for everyone else. It's fine for you to go out for a meal on occasions but try where possible to make good food choices.

Restaurants and Takeaways

Look at the menu and decide on how many courses you would like. Below are some ideas on how to control your fat and sugar intake.

Starters

- Try low fat starters such as tandoori chicken or chicken tikka, instead of deep fried starters such as samosas, pakoras and spring rolls
- Choose a stock based or vegetable soup as an alternative to a cream soup. Choose bread rather than garlic bread
- Choose a fruit cocktail, smoked salmon or salad as an alternative to prawn cocktail. If available have a low fat dressing rather than an oil based dressing

Main Dishes

- Be careful with curries, which have the name masalas or kormas as these are high in fat
- If you are having a traditional roast meal choose grilled/roast lean meat/chicken with plenty of boiled vegetables. Try to accompany this with jacket potatoes or boiled potatoes instead of chips/roast potatoes
- Try fish for a change
- Try to choose pasta dishes that are tomato rather than cream based, as these are lower in fat. Limit any cheese you add to the pasta
- Choose thin based pizzas and try to have extra vegetables or lean meats/chicken instead of extra cheese, pepperoni, sausage as these are lower fat choices
- Try to be careful with sweet and sour dishes as the meat/chicken is fried in batter and the sauce is sweet
- Where possible choose boiled/steamed rice rather than fried rice
- When choosing a stir fry choose lots of vegetables. Chicken, lean beef or fish are good additions
- Dahl dishes are a good choice as these are high in fibre which is beneficial to your blood sugar control

Desserts

- Choose fresh fruit or tinned fruit in natural juice
- Try a scoop of ice cream either with fruit or alone
- Choose an after dinner coffee with sweetener

If you eat out regularly you may find it difficult to lose weight or you may notice your weight increasing. Try eating out only occasionally as foods prepared in restaurants tend to be high in fat, sugar and salt.

Friends and Relatives

When visiting friends or relatives it is customary to have tea and snacks, e.g. biscuits, chevda, ganthia, pakoras. These foods are high in fat so try not to feel pressured to take them. If you have tea, ask for no sugar and use your own sweetener if necessary.

Weddings and Parties

It is often difficult at these occasions to choose suitable foods, however, try to be as careful as you can. Try eating something before attending the occasion. This will help you to eat less of the fatty and sugary foods such as samosa, pakoras. Avoid sweet fizzy drinks (diet/unsweetened drinks are suitable).



What Can I do to Lose Weight?

Before starting to make changes to your diet, it is important to remember that the dietary changes you make need to be realistic and manageable.

To lose weight it is not necessary to go on a strict diet. It is better to make small changes towards a healthier way of eating and to do more activity.

Aim to lose 1 - 2 lbs per week. You can do this by:

1. **Eating less fatty/fried foods and sugary foods**
(Refer to pages 5 and 6 - discuss in more detail with your dietitian)
2. **Eat smaller portions**
3. **Increase fruit and vegetable intake**
4. **Do more physical activity to encourage weight loss and to improve blood sugar control**

Try doing the extra activity so your heart rate is moderately increased, as this is when it is beneficial e.g. rather than taking a 20 minute stroll, try and cover the same distance in 15 minutes.

This should be daily where possible, for example, walking, swimming or cycling. Household chores such as cleaning windows or the car, scrubbing cupboards and gardening are also a good way to increase your activity levels.

If you are less mobile, even a small amount of walking, or armchair exercises are beneficial. You could try leg raises whilst sitting in your chair or try holding a bottle of water in each hand and raising your arms. Start off slowly and gradually increase to a level of comfort. Even if you do not lose weight, these exercises will help to keep your arm and leg muscles mobile.

Even if you do not lose weight recent studies have shown the effects of increasing physical activity to be beneficial to blood pressure control, diabetes control and to help keep your heart healthy.

The key is to ensure you increase your activity to above what you currently do and then gradually build up to a comfortable level.

TIP:

In order to successfully lose and maintain weight loss, continued regular physical activity is vital.

Recommendations suggest 30 minutes daily.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

1. Why does diabetes develop?

Your risk of developing Type 2 diabetes increases if one or more of the following applies to you. If you...

- are overweight (particularly if your weight is distributed around your tummy)
- have one or more parents who have diabetes
- are of Asian origin
- have had diabetes in pregnancy

If you are overweight, losing weight through dietary changes and increased activity are the best possible things you can do to reduce your chances of developing diabetes.

2. Can eating too much sugar cause diabetes?

Eating too much sugar is not a direct cause of diabetes, however if you are overweight this maybe linked with a high sugar intake. Being overweight is a strong predictor of diabetes so if necessary you should reduce your sugar intake to help lower your weight.

3. What can happen if my diabetes is uncontrolled?

In the long term poorly controlled diabetes can cause problems to other parts of the body:

- Heart
- Kidneys
- Eyes
- Legs and feet

Factors that increase the risk of complications are:

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- Being overweight
- Inactivity

Research shows that maintaining blood sugars between 4-7 mmols/litre (as near to normal as possible) strongly reduces the risk of complications.

4. Can I fast if I have diabetes?

Yes, fasting is allowed however if you are on tablets or insulin for your diabetes it is important to inform either your GP or Diabetes team so that any necessary alterations to your medication can be made.

Notes...

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CONTACT NUMBER

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