

DIABETES AND PLATE METHOD

Soghra Jarvandi, Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

Kristen Johnson, Assistant Professor, Department of Family and Consumer Sciences

Lauren King, Undergraduate Research Assistant, Department of Psychology

University of Tennessee

What is the Plate Method?

The plate method is an easy way for people with diabetes to plan healthy meals. The plate method can help you choose the right amount of foods to help you manage your blood sugar. This visual method of meal planning focuses on eating a balanced meal of all food groups: vegetables, fruits, grains, protein and dairy.

Carbohydrates in starchy vegetables, fruits, grains and dairy can raise your blood sugar. The key is portion control, which means eating a healthy amount from each food group. The plate method emphasizes nonstarchy vegetables, which do not have many carbohydrates and do not have a large effect on your blood sugar. The plate method uses a 9-inch plate and limits carbohydrates to a small section of the plate, which can help you control your calorie and carbohydrate intake.

Meal planning for people with diabetes varies based on their individual needs. Work with your health care provider and a registered dietitian to create a meal plan that works for you.

How to Use the Plate Method

Follow these easy steps to plan a healthy meal using the plate method.

On a 9-inch plate, fill:

Half of your plate

Nonstarchy
vegetables

A quarter of your plate

Protein foods

A quarter of your plate

Grains and starchy
vegetables



Image source: NIH/NIDDK website

In addition to the foods on your plate, add:

- Water or no-calorie drink,
- Fruit (e.g., a small piece of whole fruit), or
- Dairy (e.g., 1 cup skim milk or yogurt).

Nonstarchy Vegetables

Some examples of nonstarchy vegetables include:

- Salad
- Turnip greens
- Kale
- Asparagus
- Broccoli
- Carrot



Nonstarchy vegetables give you essential vitamins and minerals your body needs. Eating vegetables also help you feel full. Filling up on nonstarchy vegetables helps lower your intake of carbohydrates, which can cause your blood sugar to spike.

Protein Foods

Protein foods come from:

- Plant sources (with healthy fats), such as nuts, edamame and lentils.
- Animal sources, such as meat, fish, cheese and eggs.



Choose protein foods with healthy fats more often, and limit red meat and cheese. When choosing red meat or cheese, choose lean versions of red meat or low-fat cheese.

Why lean protein? Protein foods that are not lean can contain high levels of saturated fat, which can:

- Raise your blood cholesterol levels.
- Put you at a higher risk of heart attack or stroke.

Grains and Starchy Vegetables

Some examples of grains and starchy vegetables include:

- Whole-grain bread
- Sweet potatoes or yams
- Whole-wheat pasta
- Potatoes
- Brown rice
- Dried bean, lentils, and peas



Choose whole grains and limit refined grains like white bread and white rice.

Dairy

Dairy foods, such as milk and yogurt, are important sources of calcium and protein. Note that dairy products contain natural sugar and can raise your blood sugar.



Added Sugars

Decrease your intake of foods with added sugars, like:

- Sweet pickles
- Sugar-sweetened cereals
- Sweetened yogurt
- Canned fruits in syrup
- Ice cream
- Cookies, cakes and pies
- Pastries
- Sodas, sweet tea and other sweetened drinks

Additional Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Diabetes [cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/eat-well/meal-plan-method.html](https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/eat-well/meal-plan-method.html)

American Diabetes Association. diabetesforecast.org/2020/02-mar-apr/4-recipes-for-taking.html

NIH-National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/diet-eating-physical-activity



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