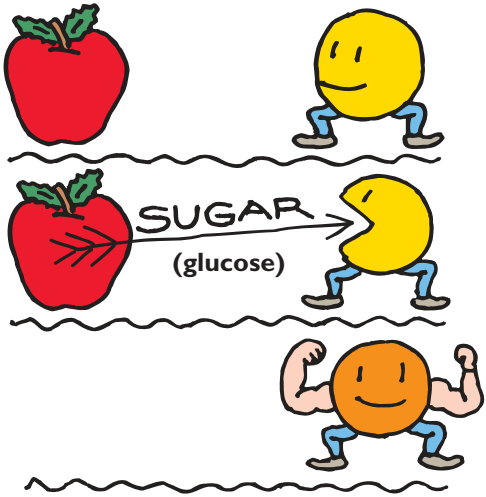
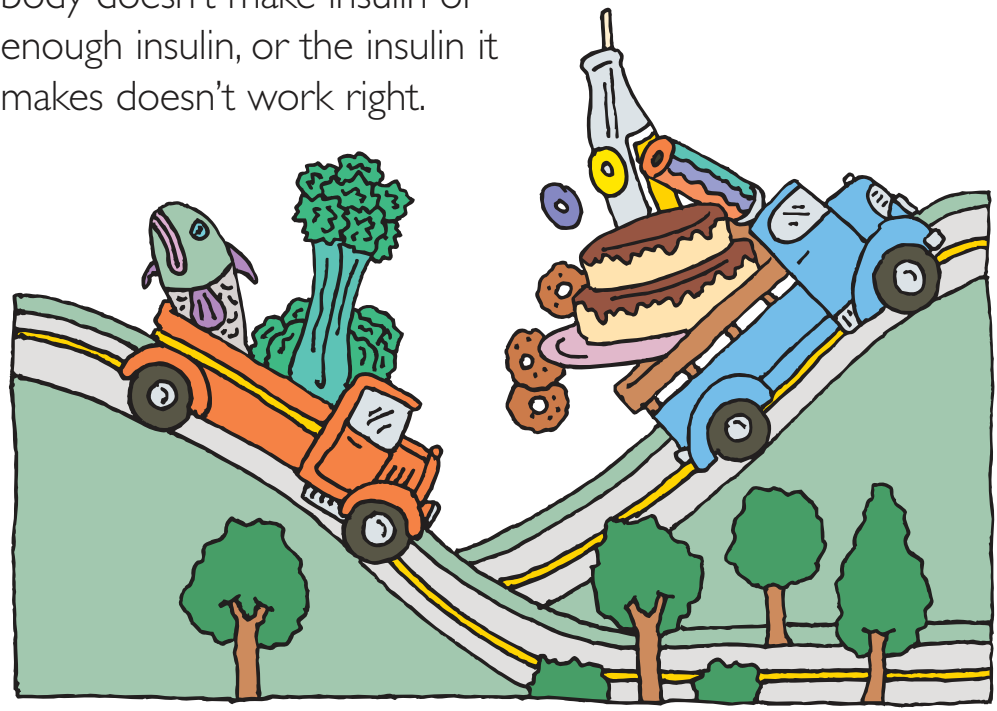
DIABETES
& HEALTHY EATING

Food gives you the energy you need for healthy living. Your body changes most of the food you eat into a sugar called *glucose.*

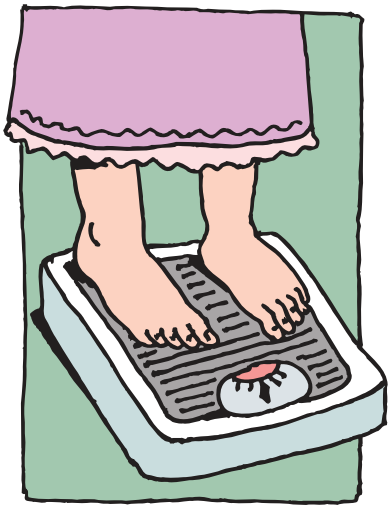


Insulin helps your cells get the sugar (glucose) you need for energy. Insulin also helps keep your blood sugar levels normal. When you have diabetes, your body doesn't make insulin or enough insulin, or the insulin it makes doesn't work right.



Even though your insulin does not work right, healthy eating can help keep your blood sugar from becoming too high or too low.

Planning Your Meals



Healthy eating includes planning your meals, choosing healthy foods, and watching your weight. It also includes balancing what you eat and how much you eat with how active you are.

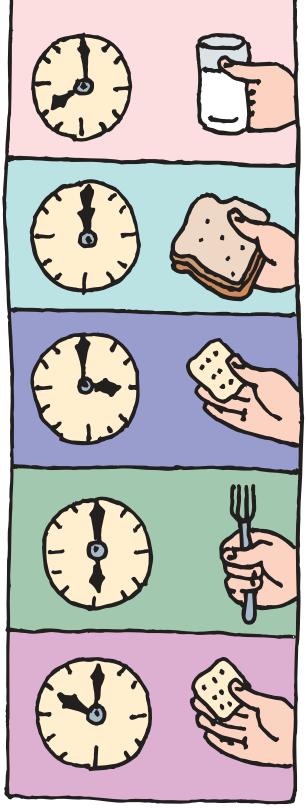
Your doctor, diabetes educator, or a dietitian will help you plan your meals.

What you eat depends on:

- ☐ how much you weigh
- ☐ how active you are
- ☐ your blood sugar levels
- ☐ the foods you like to eat

The foods you eat change your blood sugar levels in different ways. You will learn how to make healthy food choices that help control your blood sugar.

If you take diabetes pills or insulin, you will also learn how to space your eating throughout the day. This will help your medicine keep your blood sugar under control.



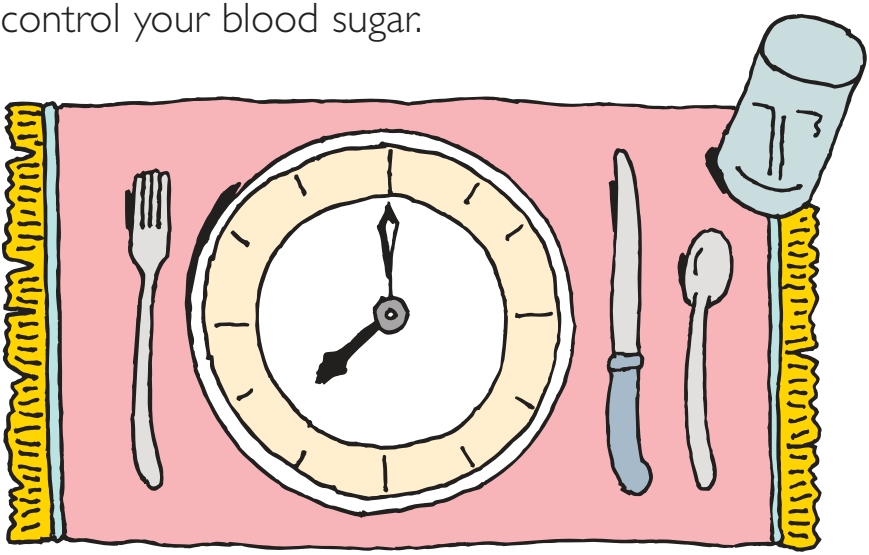
Some people, especially active people, may need snacks in between their regular meals.

Follow your meal plan.
Try not to skip any meals or snacks.

Your goal is to:

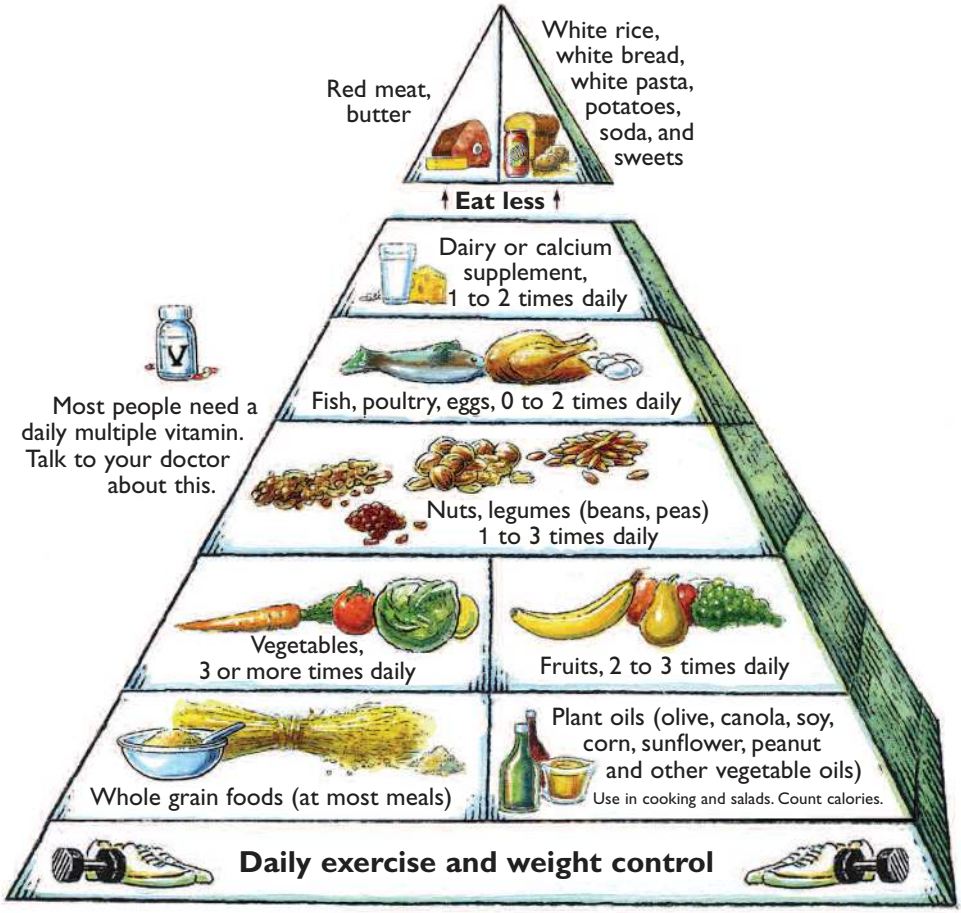
- ☐ eat healthy foods
- ☐ eat the right amounts of food
- ☐ eat your food at the right times

to control your blood sugar.



Choosing Healthy Foods

A healthy eating pyramid like the one below will help you control your blood sugar.



Adapted from *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy* by Walter C. Willett, M.D.
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Your goal is to eat a healthy balance of carbohydrate, protein, and fat. Carbohydrate is the body's main source of energy. Health experts recommend about half of the calories you eat each day be from foods high in carbohydrate, such as whole grains.

High-fiber foods

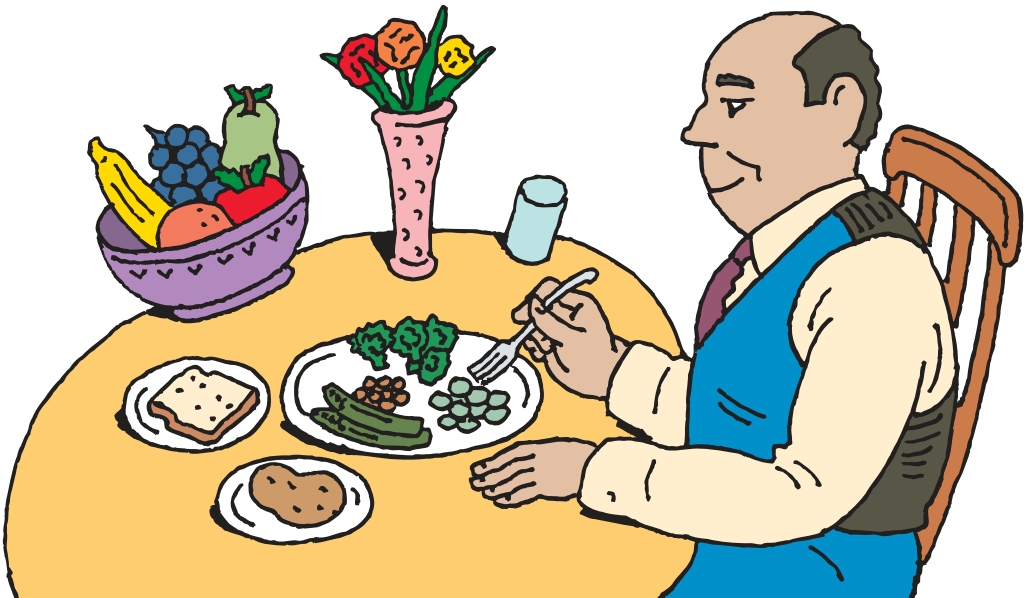
Eating foods high in fiber helps control blood sugar. Fiber can also make you feel full, which helps you to eat less.

High-fiber foods include:

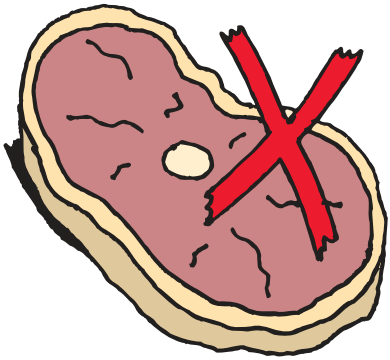
- ☐ fresh fruits and vegetables
- ☐ whole grain cereals and breads
- ☐ beans, peas, lentils, and legumes
- ☐ brown rice, barley, and oats

Foods low in fat and salt

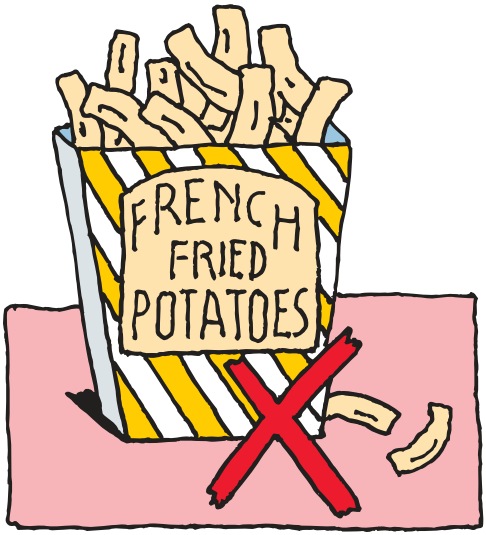
Fatty foods have more calories than other foods. Eating low-fat foods helps you control your weight. Diabetes can be harder to control if you are overweight. Eating less fat can also help prevent heart disease.



Eat less fat

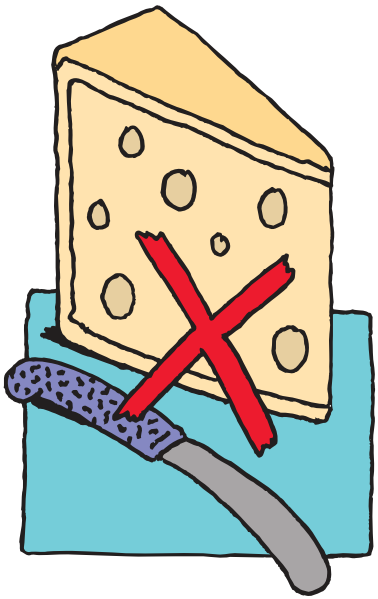


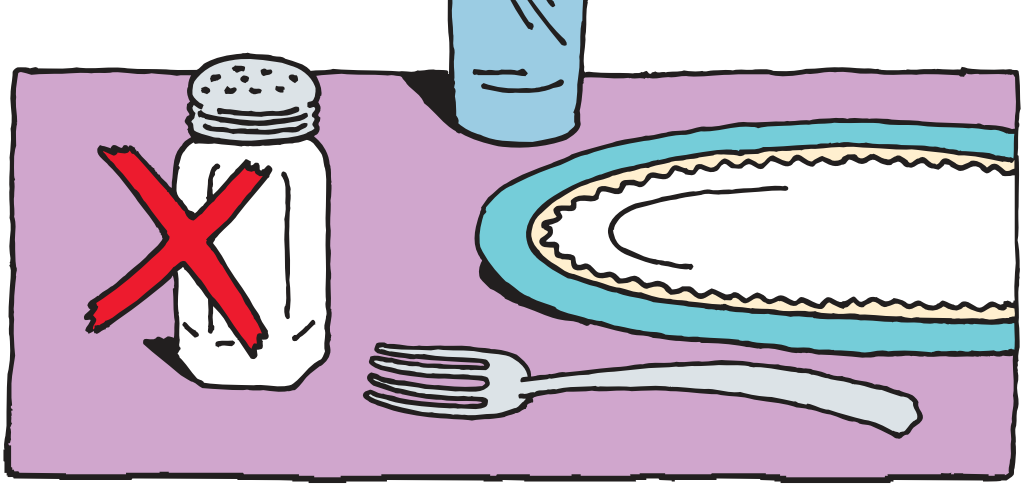
- ☐ cut back on butter, margarine, oil, salad dressing, and sour cream when eating or cooking



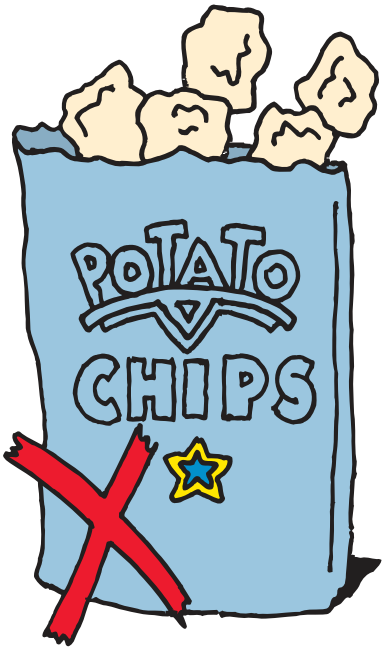
- ☐ cut back on fatty meats, whole milk, cheese, fried foods, peanut butter, and chips
- ☐ be careful about what you order in fast-food restaurants (fast foods often have a lot of fat)

Other ways to cut the fat in your diet: Remove the skin from chicken, and trim the fat from meat before cooking or eating it. Drink fat-free, low-fat or skim milk. Eat low-fat or fat-free cheeses and desserts. Bake, grill, or broil food instead of frying it.



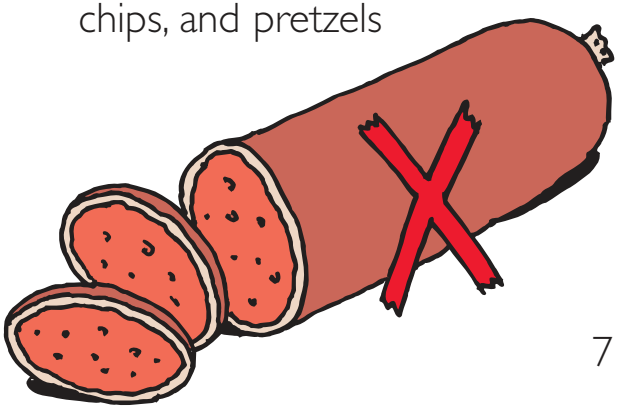


High blood pressure is a common problem in people with diabetes. Your doctor may ask you to eat less salt if you have high blood pressure.

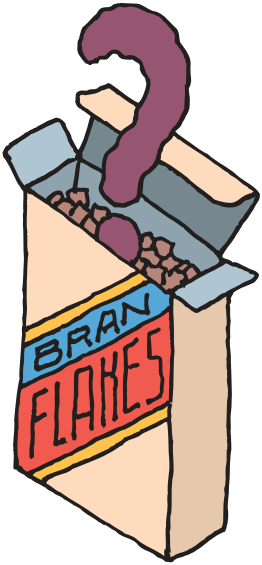


Ways to cut down on salt:

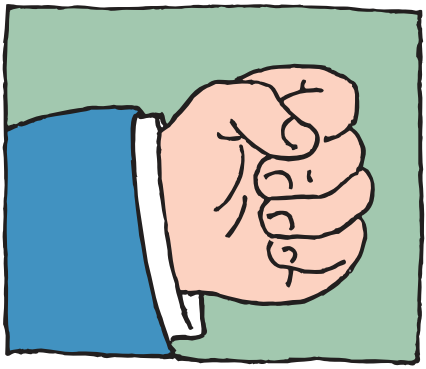
- ☐ don't add salt to the food you eat or cook
- ☐ don't put the salt shaker on the table
- ☐ use salt-free seasonings such as garlic powder, onions, hot pepper, spices and herbs
- ☐ stay away from high-salt foods such as lunch meat, pickles, chips, and pretzels



How Much Should You Eat?



Learn about serving sizes. It is an important way to help control blood sugar levels. One way to know how much food you are eating is to weigh or measure it. Use a measuring cup and spoons or a scale.



FIST = 1 CUP

Most people eat more than they think. After measuring foods for a while, you will often be able to know a serving size just by looking at it.

THUMB = 1 OZ. OF CHEESE

DECK OF CARDS = 3 OZ. OF MEAT

Read Food Labels

Most foods have a nutrition label. Food labels are a big help in choosing foods that fit into your meal plan.

Always read food labels when you shop.

Check the serving size.

Check total carbohydrate.
(Sugars are part of total carbohydrate. Don't count twice.)

Avoid added sugars.

Nutrition Facts	
Servings Per Container: 8	
Serving Size: 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	**230**
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugar	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

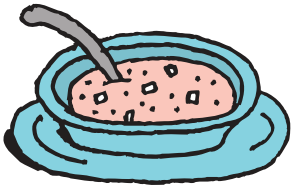
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

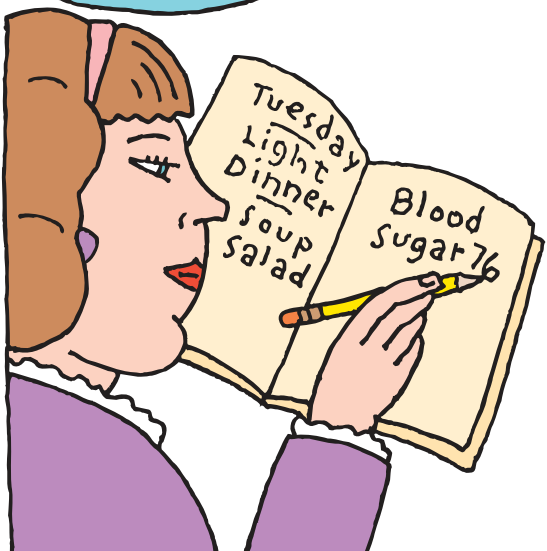
Illustration only.

Low fat is good.
(3g or less)

Eat less of these.

High fiber is good.
(3g or more)





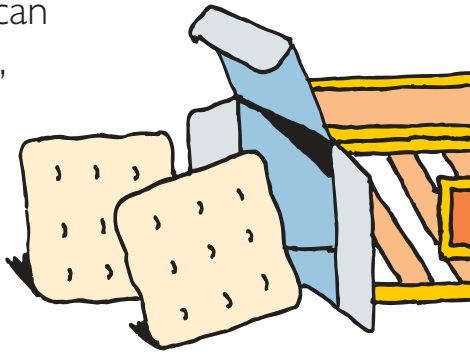
Write It Down

Keep a food diary. This will help you see how your blood sugar is changed by *what* you eat, *when* you eat, and *how much* you eat.

Dining Out

If your have diabetes, plan ahead if you eat out. This will help you control you blood sugar. Here are some ways to plan ahead:

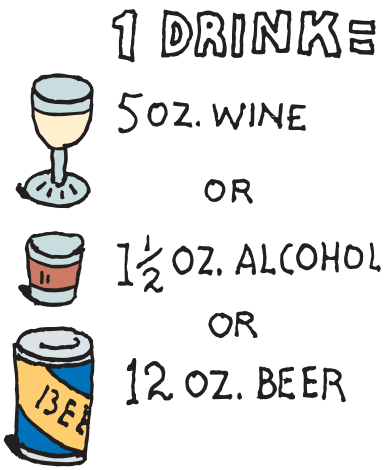
- ☐ find out what is being served, in case you need to bring something that fits into your meal plan
- ☐ drink water or diet soda, if you can
- ☐ in restaurants, order food grilled, baked, or broiled – not fried
- ☐ ask for sauces and dressing to be served on the side
- ☐ always carry a snack in case your meal plans change



About Alcohol

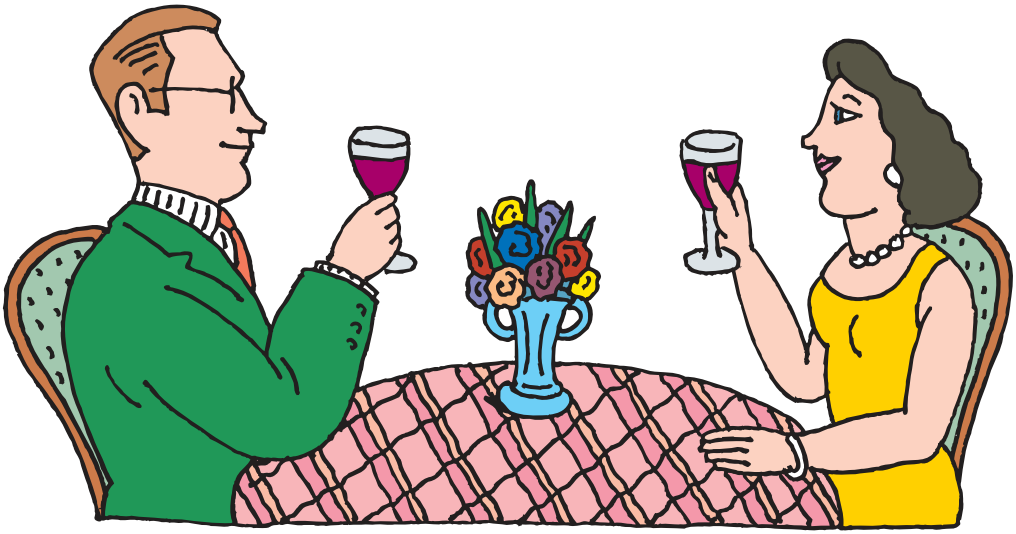
Talk to your doctor if you drink alcohol. If you take insulin or diabetes pills, your blood sugar level may drop too low after you drink alcohol.

Don't have more than one or two drinks a day. Be sure to test your blood sugar after drinking.

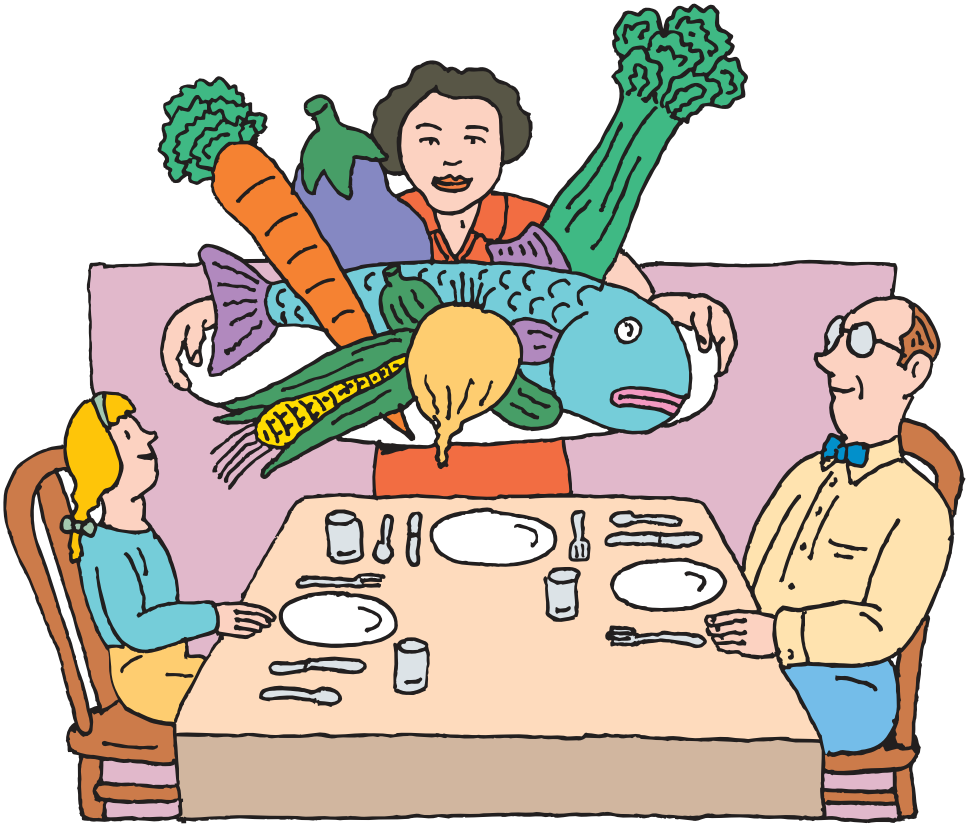


If you drink alcohol:

- ☐ drink with a meal or right after eating
- ☐ drink slowly
- ☐ choose light beer or white wine
- ☐ mix drinks with club soda, diet soda, or water



Keep your diabetes under control! Balance when you eat, what you eat, and how much you eat with regular exercise and taking your medicine.



Healthy eating is important for people with diabetes and everyone else. You and your family can enjoy the same tasty, healthy foods.

Always talk to your doctor before making any changes in your diabetes treatment plan.

A free handout from Learning About Diabetes, Inc.
http://www.learningaboutdiabetes.org