

## **Healthy diet reduces risk**

Being overweight is one of the main risk factors for developing diabetes. If you fall into the at-risk category you can reduce your chances of developing type 2 diabetes if you make sure to eat a healthy diet and lose weight if necessary.

The key to healthy eating is eating regularly, watching your serving size and following a healthy eating plan that is low in refined sugars and fat.

This means:

- Choosing lower fat options when eating meat, poultry, dairy products and spreads
- Enjoying a good variety of fresh fruit and vegetables
- Getting most of your energy from unrefined and whole grain foods
- Keeping high sugar, high fat foods as treats only
- You need more than 40 different nutrients for good health and no single food supplies them all
- Eating a wide variety of foods is the key to ensuring that you get all the nutrients you need.

Your diet should be:

- Low in fat, salt and sugar
- High in fibre
- High in fruit and vegetables.

Pay attention to the amount of carbohydrate on your plate because very large portions may increase your blood sugars and contribute to you eventually developing type 2 diabetes. Large amounts of carbohydrate may also lead you to put on weight, which is another risk factor for type 2 diabetes. Carbohydrate is one of the main sources of energy in our diet and also provides fibre, vitamins and minerals. It comes from starchy foods like bread, cereals, potatoes, pasta and rice and from sugary foods like sweets, minerals, cakes, biscuits, desserts, jam and tea or coffee with sugar added.

For a healthy diet, choose carbohydrate foods that are high in fibre like wholemeal bread, wholegrain breakfast cereals, jacket potatoes and wholegrain rice and pasta. These help to keep blood sugar and blood fat (or cholesterol) levels down, prevent constipation and help to fill us up – useful if you are trying to shed some weight. But be aware – too much carbohydrate may also lead you to put on weight so be careful that your portion sizes aren't too big.

To shed those extra pounds, you must either decrease the amount of calories you are eating, or increase the amount of calories you are burning by being more physically active – and ideally, you should do both.

## **Plan your diet**

It will help you to stick to your new regime if you sit down and carefully plan your meals for the week and your shopping list. You will also probably need to de-junk and get rid of any temptations before you start.

In order to eat well you must:

- Shop well
- Cook well
- Make sure you have healthy foods in the cupboard
- Top tips for a healthy weight

Your first aim should be to avoid putting on any more weight. Once you have stopped gaining weight, you can then work on losing some of those extra pounds.

Aim to lose no more than one to two pounds per week. If you lose too much weight too quickly (more than two pounds a week), you'll probably end up putting most of this weight back on again.

## **Tips for losing weight:**

- Set yourself a realistic goal, one that you can reach within a reasonable period of time, for example one stone in three months. Once you've reached this target, you should then work towards keeping this weight off
- By far the best diet for losing weight is a healthy, low-fat, high-fibre one which contains lots of fruit and vegetables. In the long term, fad diets (and there are hundreds!) don't work
- Try to be more physically active every day
- Enrolling in a weight loss group like Weight Watchers is a good idea to help keep you motivated
- Make one or two small changes each week. For example, during week one, have fruit instead of crisps for your mid-morning break and walk for 15 minutes at lunchtime. Then, move on to something else
- Every small change you make will help and is a step in the right direction
- Weigh yourself weekly (don't be tempted to stand on the scales more often than this) and reward yourself if you are doing well

## **Suitable snacks**

Eating sensibly does not mean you can't have any snacks, here are some suitable ones to fill the gaps:

- Fruit (have a bowl of fruit salad with fresh and tinned fruit in its own juice made up in the fridge).
- Diet yogurt.
- Diet minerals.
- Plain biscuits, for example Marietta, Rich Tea, Digestives, Fig Rolls.
- Raw vegetable sticks, for example, carrots or cucumber with some low-fat hummus
- If you are particularly hungry, try a bowl of cereal with low fat or skimmed milk, or a slice of wholemeal bread, or a few crisp-breads topped with a tomato or banana.

## **Alcohol**

Men should drink no more than three units of alcohol per day and 21 regular drinks per week.

Women should drink no more than two units a day or 14 regular drinks per week, with some alcohol-free days each week. One unit of alcohol regular equals:

- Half a pint of beer or lager
- A small glass of wine
- A pub measure of spirits
- Avoid low-alcohol beers as these are high in sugar; and low sugar beers, which tend to be high in alcohol
- Remember if you are trying to lose weight, alcohol contains lots of calories and should be curtailed

