



# Diabetes

[Diabetes Home](#)

## Diabetes Meal Planning

The graphic features a central 7-day calendar grid with days of the week as column headers. The grid is surrounded by various food items including salmon, green beans, asparagus, carrots, eggplant, oranges, chili, eggs, corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, and potatoes. The title 'Meal Plan' is prominently displayed at the top center of the grid area.

Counting [carbs](#) and the [plate method](#) are two common tools that can help you plan meals.

A meal plan is your guide for when, what, and how much to eat to get the nutrition you need while keeping your blood sugar levels in your target range. A good meal plan will consider your goals, tastes, and lifestyle, as well as any medicines you’re taking.

A good meal plan will also:

- Include more nonstarchy vegetables, such as broccoli, spinach, and green beans.
- Include fewer added sugars and refined grains, such as white bread, rice, and pasta with less than 2 grams of [fiber](#) [↗](#) per serving.
- Focus on whole foods instead of highly [processed foods](#) [↗](#) as much as possible.

Carbohydrates in the food you eat raise your blood sugar levels. How fast carbs raise your blood sugar depends on what the food is and what you eat with it. For example, drinking fruit juice raises blood sugar faster than eating whole fruit. Eating carbs with foods that have protein, fat, or fiber slows down how quickly your blood sugar rises.



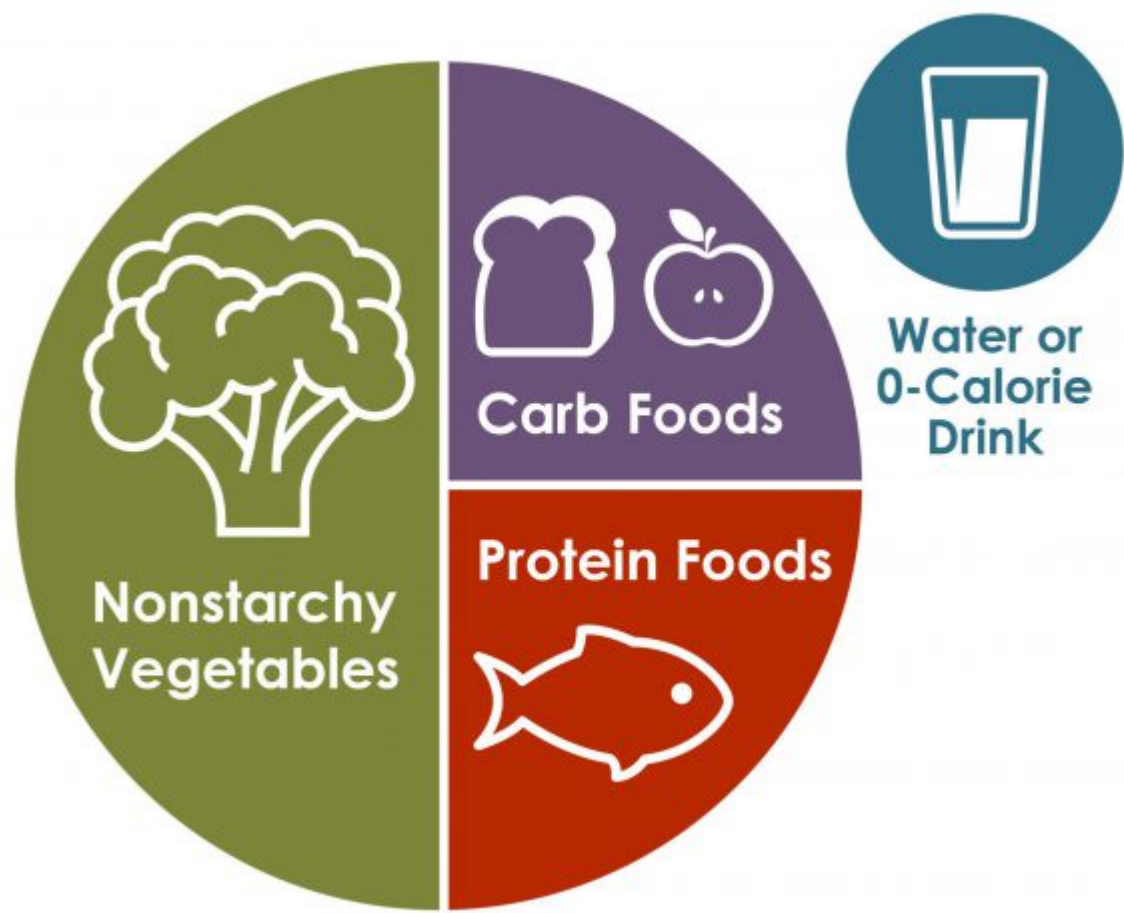
For more information, see [Carb Counting](#).

You'll want to plan for regular, balanced meals to avoid high or [low blood sugar](#) levels. Eating about the same amount of carbs at each meal can be helpful. Counting carbs and using the plate method are two common tools that can make planning meals easier too.

## Counting Carbs

Keeping track of how many carbs you eat and setting a limit for each meal can help keep your blood sugar levels in your target range. Work with your doctor or a registered dietitian to find out how many carbs you can eat each day and at each meal, and then refer to this [list](#) of common foods that contain carbs and serving sizes. For more information, see [Carb Counting](#).

# The Plate Method



It’s easy to eat more food than you need without realizing it. The plate method is a simple, visual way to make sure you get enough nonstarchy vegetables and lean protein while limiting the amount of higher-carb foods you eat that have the highest impact on your blood sugar.

Start with a 9-inch dinner plate (about the length of a business envelope):

- Fill half with nonstarchy vegetables, such as salad, green beans, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, and carrots.
- Fill one quarter with a lean protein, such as chicken, turkey, beans, tofu, or eggs.
- Fill one quarter with carb foods. Foods that are higher in carbs include grains, starchy vegetables (such as potatoes and peas), rice, pasta, beans, fruit, and yogurt. A cup of milk also counts as a carb food.

Then choose water or a low-calorie drink such as unsweetened iced tea to go with your meal.

## Portion Distortion Quiz

Did you know? Food portions are much larger now than they were 20 years ago. Test your knowledge of portion distortion [here](#) .

# About Portion Size

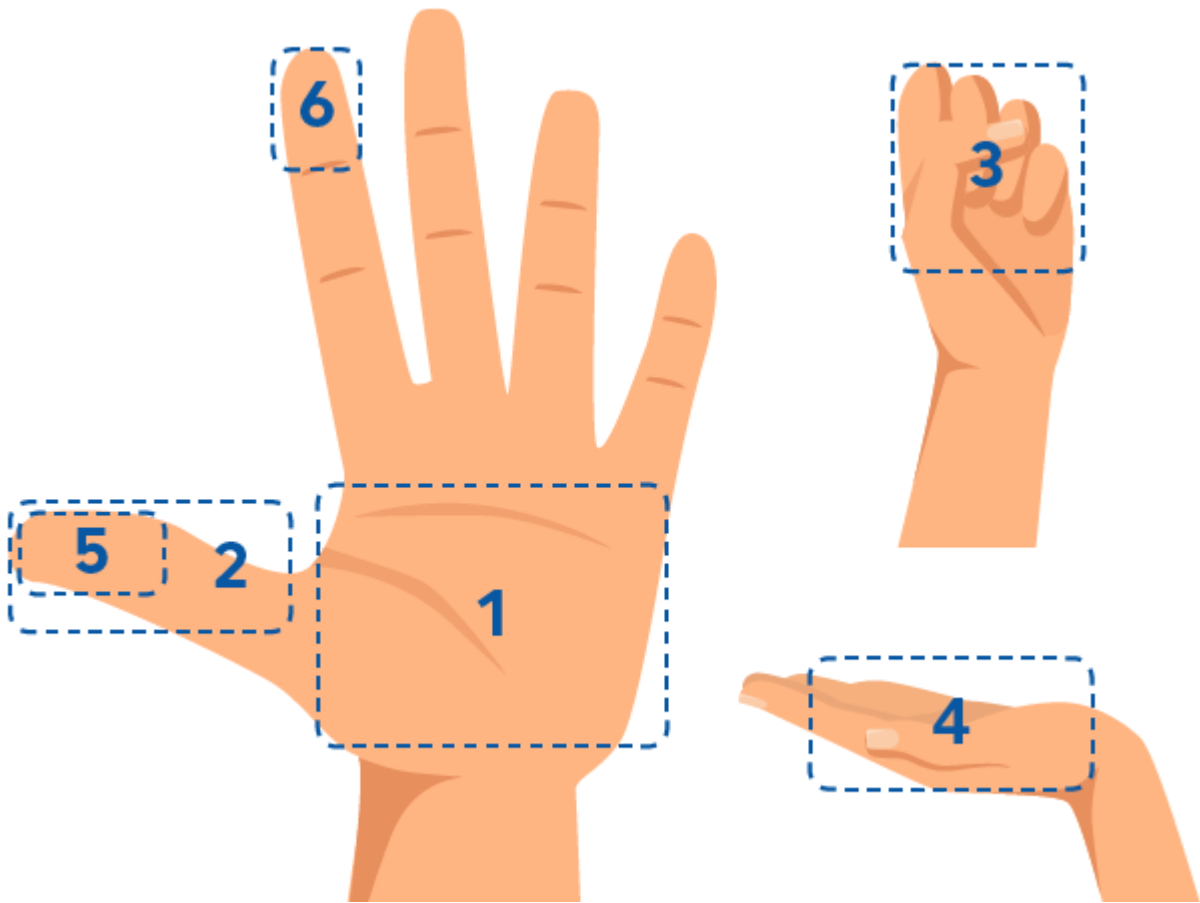
Portion size and [serving size](#) aren’t always the same. A portion is the amount of food you choose to eat at one time, while a serving is a specific amount of food, such as one slice of bread or 8 ounces (1 cup) of milk.

These days, portions at restaurants are quite a bit larger than they were several years ago. One entrée can equal 3 or 4 servings! Studies show that people tend to eat more when they’re served more food, so getting portions under control is really important for managing weight and blood sugar.

If you’re [eating out](#), have half of your meal wrapped up to go so you can enjoy it later. At home, measure out snacks; don’t eat straight from the bag or box. At dinnertime, reduce the temptation to go back for seconds by keeping the serving bowls out of reach. And with this “handy” guide, you’ll always have a way to estimate portion size at your fingertips:

1. **3 ounces of meat, fish, or poultry**  
Palm of hand (no fingers)
2. **1 ounce of meat or cheese**  
Thumb (tip to base)

3. 1 cup or 1 medium fruit
- Fist
4. 1–2 ounces of nuts or pretzels
- Cupped hand
5. 1 tablespoon
- Thumb tip (tip to 1<sup>st</sup> joint)
6. 1 teaspoon
- Fingertip (tip to 1<sup>st</sup> joint)



## Get Help

Planning meals that fit your health needs, tastes, budget, and schedule can be complicated. Ask your doctor to refer you to [diabetes self-management education and support](#) (DSMES) services, where you’ll work with a diabetes educator to create a healthy meal plan just for you. You can also visit the [Find a Diabetes Education Program in Your Area](#) [↗](#) locator for DSMES services near you.

### More Information

- Video: [Healthy Eating](#)
- [More About Meal Planning](#)
- [Weekly Meal Planner](#)  [PDF – 30 KB]
- [Diabetes Food Hub – Recipes for Healthy Living \(ADA\)](#) [↗](#)
- [Tasty Recipes for People with Diabetes and Their Families](#)  [PDF – 9 MB]
- [Rethink Your Drink](#)
- [Recipes for a Heart-Healthy Lifestyle](#) [↗](#)

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