

## How to set healthy and happy eating goals

It is important to set healthy eating goals to effectively control blood sugar over a long period of time.

These goals will be different for each person depending on the following;

- Personal preference of the various food types.
- Cultural background.
- Other health conditions.
- Willingness to change to better food choices.
- Current weight.
- Lifestyle and work schedule.

Consider the following when setting your healthy and happy eating goals:

- **Weight loss goals:** losing weight requires eating in a manner that will produce less energy than you will spend. For example losing half a kilogram a week will require eating in a manner that will reduce the energy produced from foods by at least 1000 calories (4184 kilojoules) . How to eat and achieve this energy loss daily will depend on the level of physical activity.
- **Existing health condition:** A person living with type 2 diabetes and has other health conditions like hypertension or high fat lipids will have to choose a diet that will help to manage these other diseases as well. For example, the eating pattern of choice should be the Mediterranean style diet, low carbohydrate and very low carbohydrate diets that are beneficial for reducing blood sugar, blood lipids and blood pressure.
- **Level of physical activity:** Exercise improves metabolic balance and mental health. Therefore, it is important to incorporate and consider physical activity in planning meals and eating patterns.
- **The type of foods you prefer:** Always choose the types of food you enjoy eating when deciding on a healthy and happy eating plan. There are many options to choose from each of the recommended food types (see table in the meal planning section below).
- **Express willingness to change to better food choices:** Sometimes, the foods you love eating will not always fall under the healthy options. The willingness to change to healthier options will help you to eat in a manner that will help you achieve blood sugar control.

### 1.1. Clearing the hype about carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are generally referred to as energy giving foods.

There are three types of carbohydrates;

- Complex carbohydrates which includes starch and fiber. They are made up of long chains of sugar molecules. The difference between starch and fiber is that starch can be digested and broken down in the digestive system to form simple sugars while fiber will pass the digestive system without being broken down. Fiber has two forms which are soluble and

insoluble. Soluble fiber slows down the breakdown of starch into simple sugars while insoluble fiber helps food to move through the digestive system and aids bowel movement.

- Simple carbohydrates which includes sugars like glucose, fructose, lactose etc. They are sweet tasting and refreshing.
- Sugar alcohols which are also sweet tasting like sugars but are not absorbed fully by the body.

Main sources of carbohydrate includes the following:

- Grains : rice, millet, quinoa etc
- Suckers: plantain
- Tubers: cassava, cocoyam, yam, potatoes
- Processed foods like bread, biscuits, pasta, tortillas