

# Best Foods for You: Healthy Food Choices for People with Diabetes

## Making Choices

Managing diabetes from day to day is up to you. A large part of it is making choices about the foods you eat. Everyone knows that vegetables are healthier than cookies. But there are also best choices within each food group.

A best choice is a food that is better for you than other foods in the same group. Best choices are lower in saturated fat, trans fat, added sugar and sodium than similar foods.

## Nonstarchy Vegetables

► The best choices are fresh, frozen and canned vegetables and vegetable juices without added salt (sodium), fat or sugar such as:

- Asparagus
- Green beans
- Carrots
- Cabbage
- Eggplant
- Cauliflower
- Broccoli
- Mushrooms
- Tomatoes
- Spinach
- Onion
- Peppers

► If using canned veggies, drain and rinse them with water to wash away about 40% of the sodium.

## Fruit

► The best choices are fresh, frozen and canned fruits without added sugars such as:

- Apple
- Blueberries
- Orange
- Grapefruit
- Grapes
- Peaches
- Pear
- Plums
- Cherries

► If you use canned fruit in syrup, drain and rinse the fruit with water to wash away the extra syrup.

## Milk

► The best choices are milk and yogurt without added sugars such as:

- Fat-free or low-fat milk (1%)
- Unflavored soy milk
- Plain, nonfat yogurt
- "light" yogurt

## Grains and Starchy Vegetables

► The best choices are whole grain foods, beans, peas and lentils and starchy vegetables without added fats, sugars or sodium.

## Best Choices of Whole Grain Foods

► Look for cereals, breads, and grains with these whole grains as the first ingredient:

- Whole wheat flour
- Whole oats/oatmeal
- Whole-grain corn/corn meal
- Popcorn
- Brown rice
- Whole-grain rye
- Whole-grain barley
- Wild rice
- Buckwheat/buckwheat flour
- Triticale
- Bulgur (cracked wheat)
- Millet
- Quinoa
- Sorghum

► Choose cereals with at least 3 grams of fiber and less than 6 grams of sugar per serving.

## Best Choices of Legumes and Lentils

- Beans such as black, pinto and kidney
- Lentils and dried peas
- Fat-free refried beans and vegetarian baked beans

## Best Choices of Starchy Vegetables

- Acorn squash
- Butternut squash
- Green peas
- Corn
- Parsnip
- Pumpkin
- Sweet potato
- Plantain

## Protein

- The best choices are plant-based protein foods, fish, chicken, and lean meats such as:

- Beans and lentils
- Nuts and seeds
- Fish and seafood
- Eggs and cheese
- Chicken, turkey, and duck without the skin
- Buffalo, rabbit and venison
- Lean cuts of beef, lamb, and pork such as chuck, rump roast, round, sirloin, T-bone steak and tenderloin

**A great protein choice.**

Dried beans, hummus, lentils, nuts, soy-based "nuggets" and "burgers" are examples of plant based protein foods. Use them in your meals instead of beef, poultry or fish.

## Fats

- Best choices or “good fats” are unsaturated fats like omega-3, monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats:
- Avocado, olives and seeds such as flax, pumpkin or sesame
- Nuts such as almonds, brazil, cashews, hazelnuts, peanuts, pine, pecans, pistachios and walnuts
- Oils such as olive, canola, corn, flaxseed, safflower, soybean and sunflower
- Salad dressings and mayonnaise

**Omega-3 Fatty acids are good for your Heart.** When picking your fat sources, consider these foods:

- Albacore tuna, mackerel, halibut, herring, salmon, sardines and trout
- Flaxseeds and English walnuts
- Oils such as canola, soybean, flaxseed and walnut

## Go Easy

- Avoid regular soda, fruit punch, sports drinks, sweet tea, and other sugary drinks. Choose water and calorie free drinks instead.
- Cut back on high calorie snack foods and desserts such as chips, cookies, cakes and ice cream.
- Replace “bad” fats from fatty meats, full fat dairy, lard, butter and sour cream with “good” fats.
- Keep portions small.

## Foods I Like

• 2 •

**Looking for healthy recipes and food tips?**

Sign up for our FREE online resource,  
*Recipes for Healthy Living* at [diabetes.org/recipes](http://diabetes.org/recipes).

**1-800-DIABETES**  
**(1-800-342-2383)**  
**[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)**