BE WELL | THE YEAR OF YOU

Food as medicine

Food is more than fuel. It can be an important tool to prevent and manage chronic diseases like diabetes. Diabetes-friendly nutrition focuses on making informed dietary choices that stabilize glucose, reduce inflammation, and support your overall health.

Overall, choosing healthy eating habits that you can stick with long term, and that work for your lifestyle and preferences, is what will help you manage diabetes and feel your best. Here's what to prioritize when building your diabetes-friendly diet:

- Fiber-rich carbohydrates like whole grains, legumes, vegetables and berries. Fiber-rich foods slow down digestion and prevent rapid spikes in your blood sugar levels.
- Lean proteins like chicken, fish, tofu, lentils and eggs. Protein slows your body's absorption of carbohydrates, which helps to stabilize your blood sugar levels and promote muscle function.
- Healthy fats like avocados, nuts, seeds and olive oil. These heart-healthy monounsaturated fats improve insulin sensitivity and reduce inflammation.
- Low-glycemic fruits like berries, apples and citrus are healthy alternatives to satisfy any sweet cravings and provide essential vitamins and fiber without raising your blood sugar levels.
- Proper hydration supports kidney function and helps regulate your glucose levels.

Nutrition isn't always discussed as a part of treatment, but it plays a vital role in preventing and managing diabetes. Embracing diabetes-friendly nutrition habits and using food as a medicine will not only help you better manage and prevent diabetes, but it may also save you money on healthcare costs.

TIPS FOR A HEALTHY HOLIDAY SEASON

The holidays can be a stressful time if you're trying to eat healthy and save money. But you don't have to choose between good food, saving money, and staying healthy. Here are a few budget-friendly tips from researchers at the University of Nebraska to eating healthy during the holiday season:

- **Plan:** Check what food and ingredients you already have before you make your menu and shopping list.
- **Keep it simple:** Consider serving simple dishes with fewer ingredients. Less ingredients will save you money and, often, calories.
- **Shop smart:** Be aware of temptations to buy more than you need and pay attention to good deals so that you can plan your meals around ingredients that are on sale.
- **Get your money's worth of leftovers:** Leftover food? Save it effectively! Have food storage containers on hand to refrigerate or freeze uneaten food. Refrigerated leftovers can be used for other meals for up to 4 days (or longer for frozen).

Learn more: food.unl.edu/article/nutrition-education-program/tips-low-cost-holiday-meals

More tips and tools for building a weekly meal plan on a budget: myplate.gov/eat-healthy/healthy-eating-budget/make-plan

Learn more: projectfoodbox.org/blog

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