

## Healthy Snack Ideas: Type 2 Diabetes

Eating foods that have carbohydrates makes your blood glucose (sugar) go up. The amount it goes up depends on the types of foods you choose and how much you eat at one time. Blood glucose levels that are too high for too long can increase your risk of developing other health problems such as heart or kidney disease. Eating smaller meals or snacks every 4 to 6 hours can help to keep your blood glucose levels in target range and can help prevent these health problems.

Do I need to eat snacks?

Not everyone with Type 2 diabetes needs to eat snacks. You probably don't need a snack if all of the following are true:

- | Your blood glucose is in target range.
- | You are eating three meals a day.
- | You are not hungry between meals.

A snack may be helpful if:

- | Your meals are more than six hours apart.
- | You are hungry between meals.
- | You are taking certain diabetes medications, such as Glyburide, Gliclazide or insulin.
- | You are at risk for low blood glucose levels (<4mmol/L).
- | You exercise regularly.
- | Your healthcare team has recommended snacks for you.

Still unsure if you need a snack? Talk with a registered dietitian to help you decide:

- | How many snacks you need, if any.
- | When to eat snacks.
- | How much carbohydrate to have in your snacks.

## What can I eat for a snack?

Snacks should focus on healthy choices from “Canada’s Food Guide” and include at least one carbohydrate-containing food.

Carbohydrate is found in:

- | grains like oats and quinoa, rice, barley, buckwheat and grain products such as bread, crackers, pasta and breakfast cereals
- | legumes (dried beans, lentils, peas)
- | fruit
- | starchy vegetables like potatoes, yams and squash
- | milk, yogurt and fortified soy beverage.

Carbohydrate is also found in sweets such as sugar, honey, jam, chocolate, baked goods, and candy. These foods are often high in sugar and calories and low in nutrients, so choose them less often, if at all.

You may find eating protein as part of a snack may also help control your blood glucose

Good sources of protein are:

- | meat
- | poultry
- | fish
- | eggs
- | cheese
- | tofu
- | legumes (also a carbohydrate)
- | milk and fortified soy beverage (also a carbohydrate)
- | nuts



## Steps you can take

- | Choose water, plain tea or coffee or sugar-free drinks when you are thirsty. Pop, sweetened specialty teas and coffees and fruit drinks have about 25 to 30 grams (g) of carbohydrate per 250 mL (1 cup). This is equal to about 6 tsp of sugar – the same amount of carbohydrate as one bigger snack in the charts below.
- | Limit or avoid fruit juice. 250 mL (1 cup) of unsweetened apple juice has 30 g of carbohydrates, the amount in a large snack.
- | Choose higher fibre foods most often. Vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, legumes like dried beans, peas and lentils and whole grains are all good sources of fibre. Fibre helps to control blood glucose, promotes regular bowel movements and can help to reduce your cholesterol levels.
- | Limit or avoid snack foods that are high in fat, such as chips, many crackers, and pizza, and foods high in added sugar, such as cakes, cookies, chocolate, or candy. They may increase your blood glucose or lead to weight gain since it is easy to overeat these foods.
- | Avoid snacking directly out of the box or bag the food came in. It can lead to overeating. Instead, take one portion and eat it from a plate or bowl.
- | Be prepared with healthy options. Keep some healthy snacks at your desk, in your bag, or in the car.

On average, smaller snacks have one serving (15 g) of carbohydrate. Bigger snacks have two servings (30 g) of carbohydrate.

Use these tables to help you choose healthy snacks that are the right size for you:

## Chart 1: Smaller Snacks

Each of these snacks has about 15 g of carbohydrate and 85-150 calories.

- | 1 medium fruit such as an apple, orange or pear
- | 750 mL (3 cups) of plain air-popped popcorn
- | 250 mL (1 cup) of blueberries
- | 1 grain granola bar (30 g) (with no chocolate, dried fruit or marshmallows)
- | 250 mL (1 cup) of strawberries with 125 mL (½ cup) low-fat milk (skim, 1%).

Each of these snacks has about 15 g of carbohydrate and includes a source of protein.

- | 175 mL (¾ cup) of plain low-fat (0%, 1%, 2%) or sugar-free fruit yogurt (made with artificial sweetener)
- | 30 g (1 oz) of lower fat cheese (< 20% M.F.), 4 whole-grain crackers and diced cucumber
- | 250 mL (1 cup) of cantaloupe and 125 mL (½ cup) of low-fat cottage cheese
- | 250 mL (1 cup) of a latte or cappuccino made with low-fat milk or fortified soy beverage.
- | 250 mL (1 cup) of carrots with 175 mL (¾ cup) of plain low-fat yogurt dip.

## Chart 2: Bigger Snacks

Each of these snacks has about 30 g of carbohydrate and 150-250 calories.

- | 250 mL (1 cup) of sliced carrots with 30 mL (2 Tbsp) of hummus and ½ whole grain pita bread (6-inch)
- | 10 mL (2 tsp) peanut butter on 1 slice whole grain bread or 6-inch tortilla, roti or chapati and 250 mL (1 cup) of low-fat milk
- | 175 mL (¾ cup) of plain or sugar-free yogurt with 125 mL (½ cup) of canned fruit salad (canned in its own juice)
- | English muffin pizza made with one whole grain English muffin with tomato sauce and 30 g (1 oz) mozzarella cheese (16% M.F.). Toast until cheese is melted. Top with favourite vegetables.

Each of these snacks has about 30 g of carbohydrate and includes a source of protein

- | Homemade trail mix: 125 mL (½ cup) of cereal such as oats, bran flakes with 30 mL (2 Tbsp) each of raisins and unsalted nuts (such as walnuts or almonds)
- | 250 mL (1 cup) of sliced fruit such as an apple or pear and 175 mL (¾ cup) of plain low-fat Greek yogurt for dipping
- | 65 g (¼ can) canned water-packed tuna fish with 5 mL (1 tsp) light mayonnaise and 4 low-fat whole grain crackers
- | 125 mL (½ cup) of cold high-fibre cereal (at least 4 g or 15% daily value of fibre) and 250 mL (1 cup) of low-fat milk
- | 45 g (1.5 oz) of lower fat cheese with 4 rye crackers and 250 mL (1 cup) of baby tomatoes
- | 1 small homemade muffin with 250 mL (1 cup) of a low-fat milk or fortified soy beverage latte or cappuccino.

## Special Considerations

Should I buy snacks that are “made for people with diabetes”?

It is not necessary to buy snacks labeled “made for people with diabetes.” In the grocery store, you may find sugar-free bars, cookies, ice cream and drinks that are targeted at people with diabetes. Some products will say “sugar-free” or “diabetic-friendly” on the labels. Foods that are sugar-free may still contain carbohydrates and may also be high in fat, calories or salt. Read food labels carefully to see how much carbohydrate they contain before you buy them. Aim for 15 g to 30 g of carbohydrate, depending on if you want a smaller or bigger snack. Snacks should not be chosen just because they are sugar-free.

Remember to follow the key tips on this fact sheet to determine if these products are healthy snacks.



## Additional Resources

- 1 Just the Basics <http://guidelines.diabetes.ca/docs/patient-resources/just-the-basics-EN.pdf>

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