

Staying Healthy with Diabetes: 3 Diet Strategies to Prevent Complications

Nutrition researchers continue to learn how substances in some foods protect the body's cells and organs. That's good news if you have diabetes. Here are 3 diet strategies proven to pack a powerful punch against the complications of diabetes, including heart disease and eye disease.

1. Eat more fruits and vegetables.

When it comes to these foods, more really does matter, says the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Fruits and vegetables are a significant source of dietary fiber, which helps control blood sugar levels after eating. Meals high in dietary fiber have also been found to trigger hormones that tell us we are no longer hungry—a bonus for keeping weight in check.

Most importantly, fruits and vegetables possess potent vitamins, minerals and antioxidant nutrients—substances that help protect the eyes and heart from diabetes-related complications.

How *do* we “eat more fruits and vegetables?” Pretty simple, says the CDC. At mealtime, fill *half* your plate with a variety of fruits and veggies.

2. Control the build-up of cholesterol in your blood.

Too much blood cholesterol (especially “bad” LDL cholesterol) can build up in the walls of the arteries. Unstable deposits of cholesterol in the arteries lead to heart disease and stroke—the biggest killers of people with diabetes, says the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.

How to prevent this? Try a little TLC

“Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes”:

1. Choose foods low in saturated fat and cholesterol and rich in—you guessed it—fruits and vegetables.
2. Be physically active most days of the week... such as *Dance Out Diabetes!*

3. Get on the Whole Grains bandwagon.

Grains like wheat, corn, rice, oats, and quinoa that are eaten in their “whole” form are called “whole grains.” Think popcorn...the whole (popped) kernel is a “whole grain.”

Besides fiber and energy-producing nutrients, whole grains contain “phyto-chemicals” that can lower your risk for heart problems.

And surprise! Evidence shows that people who eat whole grains regularly have a lower risk of being overweight.

Experts advise us to eat at least 3 servings of whole grains each day. Each of these foods supply about 16 grams (or 1 serving) of whole grain, according to the *Whole Grain Council*:

- 4 Triscuit® crackers,
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup Cheerios®,
- 1 slice whole grain bread,
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup cooked whole grain pasta or brown rice.

It all adds up to one healthful diet and many lower risks for diabetes complications.

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