Creating a Healthful Eating Plan

When you have diabetes

This handout offers tips for planning your shopping trip and for making good choices at the store.

Think and Plan Ahead

Planning ahead, before you get to the grocery store, will help you keep your meal plan on track. The choices you make as you are walking the aisles decide whether:

- You get the most for your food dollar.
- Your meals will be well-balanced and nutritious.

Planning and preparing meals is a skill. Like riding a bicycle, it may look hard at first, but it gets easier with practice. Here are some tips to help you plan your meals and shopping trip:

- Write a weekly menu of meals and snacks you will eat at home. If you have not done this before, start with planning just 2 or 3 days.
- Using your menu as a guide, find the recipes you want to use. Write down the ingredients you will need. Then:
  - Check your cupboard and refrigerator to see what ingredients you already have for these recipes, and for the snacks you plan to eat.
  - If you use coupons, check for them in the newspaper and online. Choose coupons only for products you already plan to buy.

On to the Store!

Here are some tips for making sure you stay on track with your plan to buy healthful foods:

Before you go shopping, check your refrigerator to see if you already have any of the ingredients you need for your meal plan for the week.
• Do not shop when you are hungry. Go to the store after eating a meal, not before. This will help you avoid impulse buys that can throw your healthful diet and budget off track.

• Shop the outside sections of the store, where fresh foods are displayed. Avoiding processed foods from the store’s inner aisles may help you better control your food budget and your food choices.

• Buy only the amount of fresh foods that you will use before they spoil. These include fresh fruits and vegetables, milk and other dairy products, and meat and fish.

• If fresh fruit and vegetables are too costly, choose frozen and canned. Choose vegetables without sauces. Choose canned fruits that are labeled “natural” or are packed in juice or water.

• For cost savings, look for weekly specials and fresh foods that are in season.

• Fruits, vegetables, and whole grains should make up the largest part of your grocery list. Keep in mind that seasonal fruits and vegetables often are better buys than out-of-season produce.

• Before you buy a large size of any product, ask yourself if it is the right size for your household. Also think about the storage space you have at home. If a product is likely to spoil before you use all of it, you are better off buying a smaller size.

• To help maintain the quality of your food, add refrigerated and frozen foods to your shopping cart last. Keeping cold foods at cold temperatures reduces your risk of food-borne illness.

**Healthful Food Choices**

Keep these tips in mind when shopping for healthful foods:

• **Grains and cereal products:** For the most healthful options, make sure the ingredient list or label states “100% whole grain.”

• **Protein foods:** Choose fresh or frozen fish, poultry, and lean meats. Eggs, nuts, seeds, and beans are also high-quality protein choices. Canned beans are a quick, easy, and low-cost way to add protein to your menu. If you need to limit your salt, choose low-sodium or sodium-reduced canned beans, and rinse them well under cold running water before eating.

• **Canned foods:** If you have been told to limit your salt intake, look for low-sodium (low-salt) canned soups, vegetables, and sauces whenever you can.
• **Ready-to-eat meals and foods**: Choose these products less often because they can be higher in fat and salt. These include foods that are deep-fat fried or breaded, and foods made with cream and cheese sauces.

• **Avoid**: Breaded, deep-fried, and processed foods, since they are higher in fats and sodium.

**Recipes Online**

Visit these websites for healthful recipe ideas:


• **American Diabetes Association**: [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)
  - Click on “Diabetes Recipes”

• **Diabetes Self Management**: [www.diabetesselfmanagement.com](http://www.diabetesselfmanagement.com)
  - Click on “Nutrition and Exercise,” then click on “Meal Planning”

• **Diabetic Living**: [www.diabeticlivingonline.com](http://www.diabeticlivingonline.com)
  - Click on “Diabetic Recipes”

• **Diabetic Gourmet**: [www.diabeticgourmet.com](http://www.diabeticgourmet.com)
  - Click on “Diabetes Recipes”

• **Diabetic Lifestyle**: [www.diabeticlifestyle.com/recipes](http://www.diabeticlifestyle.com/recipes)
  - Click on type of recipe: “Course,” “Ingredient,” “Occasion,” or “Preparation”

• **EatingWell**: [www.eatingwell.com](http://www.eatingwell.com)
  - Click on “Recipes and Menus”