

Catering for people with diabetes



Diabetes
New Zealand

Planning and serving appropriate healthy food to people with diabetes can be daunting at times. Meals with friends, club meetings, sports events and even afternoon tea at the bowling club can be a challenge. However, you'll be pleased to discover people with diabetes do not need any special foods.

A healthy eating pattern and portion control are the basis for any healthy eating plan, whether or not you have diabetes. The only exception is that people with diabetes need to ensure they don't drink sugary drinks.

We all understand the benefits of eating for health, however sometimes we need to put theory into practice. People with diabetes are just like any other person and will attend functions, sports meetings, seminars, local society meetings and conferences. They are likely to be your friends or family that you have over for dinner or afternoon tea.

Like people with heart disease or those trying to lose a few extra kilograms, people following healthy eating patterns depend on the person doing the catering to provide them with a variety of food to choose from which reinforces the healthy eating message they strive to achieve.

People can be enticed with the presentation of food, so go to some extra effort to ensure your healthy options look attractive. It is best not to tempt people by offering food they shouldn't have. Be a good role model and think about serving only healthy food.

Healthy choices

If you are in charge of the catering, before each function use this checklist to ensure healthy choices are available:

- Selection of wholegrain breads without spreads
- Spreads e.g. margarine or avocado
- Low fat milk e.g. trim
- Water to drink
- Vegetables and meats cooked using no added fat
- Lean meat or chicken without the skin
- Dressings and sauces served in separate dishes on the side
- Always have a bowl of fresh fruit
- Artificial sweeteners for tea and coffee

- Diet or unsweetened drinks, but beware - many drinks with no added sugar contain large amounts of natural sugar and this will have a similar effect on increasing blood glucose as a sweetened drink
- Desserts are not necessary.

Often large selections of food are served at functions and people can be tempted to eat more than they usually would. So keep portions small. It is also a good idea to use bread and butter sized plates rather than dinner plates, so people can't put too much on their plate. Give people the choice of how much dressing, spread or sauce to add.

Provide dressings and sauces in separate dishes on the side



Have a hypo basket available for emergencies. Include glucose tablets or jellybeans as well as a longer-acting carbohydrate item such as cheese and crackers or a muesli bar.

Morning and afternoon teas

Serve for morning or afternoon tea:

- Club sandwiches made with wholegrain bread
- Asparagus rolls
- Fresh fruit platter
- Fruit buns or fruit loaf
- Muffins prepared with plenty of fruit or vegetables, oil or margarine, some wholemeal flour, bran and reduced fat milk. Watch the size of the muffins as many are large and half a muffin may be more appropriate.
- Crackers e.g. wholegrain or water crackers, topped with low fat cheese, light cream cheese, vegetables or avocado. Beware - many crackers are high in fat and may be no better than chips.

Lunch and dinner

Items to serve for lunch or dinner:

- A variety of breads especially grainy breads e.g. wholemeal, wholegrain, baguette, bagels, focaccia, pita, high fibre white
- Use margarine as a spread instead of butter
- Mini pizzas topped with lean meat, vegetables and mozzarella
- Sandwich fillings e.g. fresh or grilled vegetables, lean meat, skinless chicken, fish, egg, reduced-fat cheese such as cottage or ricotta, avocado, fresh fruit, dried fruit
- Spreads and condiments e.g. chutney, pickles, and pesto. Small amounts of ordinary tomato-based sauces and pickles are unlikely to raise blood glucose levels. If using large quantities of sweet and sour sauce or sweet chilli sauce, use an artificially sweetened variety.
- Vegetable-based soups containing legumes, e.g. red kidney beans, lentils, split peas and chickpeas
- Serve salads and vegetables with all meals but remember to serve dressings separately. Prepare dressings from ingredients such as olive or canola oils, vinegar, lemon juice, herbs and spices. Better still, try an oil-free dressing. Lemon juice with yoghurt makes a tasty dressing.
- Select healthy cooking methods e.g. oven bake, stir-fry, boil, grill, microwave, barbecue, steam or poach
- Use beans and lentils to bulk up meat dishes where possible
- Avoid processed meats, as the majority are high in fat and salt, e.g. sausages, salami, frankfurters and luncheon sausage.

It isn't always necessary to serve nibbles and finger foods before a meal. In fact, many people can consume enough energy and carbohydrates from nibbles alone and then blame the meal for pushing up blood glucose levels.



Serve
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meals

For someone with diabetes, the total amount of food eaten throughout the day has an impact on blood glucose levels. So don't be tempted to just blame the last food you ate.

Food to serve with alcohol

If you are drinking alcohol, remember never to drink on an empty stomach. A wise host will always serve food with alcohol. Some suggestions include:

- Vegetable-based dips such as hummus. Check the fat content as some can be high in fat. Use reduced-fat cream cheese, reduced-fat yoghurt, pureed vegetables or pureed beans to prepare dips. Add flavour with herbs and spices such as garlic, chilli, fresh herbs such as basil or coriander. Serve with crackers e.g. wholegrain, water crackers or crispbreads, raw vegetables and breads.
- Make your own homemade pita chips or bagel chips. Slice into triangles, brush with oil and bake in the oven until golden brown.
- Fresh seasonal fruit platters or fruit kebabs
- Vegetable sticks or vegetable kebabs with non-creamy dipping sauces e.g. tomato salsa
- Plain nuts without added salt or savoury coating e.g. almonds, peanuts, walnuts and cashews. Serve nuts in the shell with a nutcracker available, as having to crack them open slows down the amount eaten.
- Cheese platters - use reduced-fat cheeses such as cottage, ricotta, and quark
- Serve small sandwiches or top small slices of bread with various spreads and toppings such as skinless chicken, seafood or lean meat slices
- Stuffed vegetables such as small baked potatoes with a reduced-fat topping
- Cherry tomatoes, mushrooms, zucchini and peppers - these are fun served on a stick
- Sushi, pretzels and plain popcorn
- Mini fruit muffins, scones or pikelets with savoury fillings
- Baked filo pastry triangles with vegetable fillings e.g. spinach and ricotta cheese
- Homemade bite sized pizzas topped with vegetables, lean meat and mozzarella cheese.

Planning is your best tool. Serve a selection of healthy food choices to make sure your function is a success.