

## First Steps in Meal Planning

Living well with diabetes doesn't mean giving up all your favorite foods. A few well-planned changes can make a big difference in your diabetes control – and that means you'll feel your best! Here's how to be healthy with diabetes.

**Be consistent** – try to eat about the same amount of food at about the same time each day. Your body works best on three meals a day, and a couple of small snacks in between. Most people find a small evening snack is a good idea.

**Be lean** – just losing a few pounds can improve your blood sugar control. You can lose weight by eating more fruits and vegetables, cutting back on fatty and fried foods, and getting more active.

**Be carb wise** – Sugary and starchy foods contain carbohydrates. Carbs digest to form blood sugar. Carbohydrates are an important part of a healthy diet, but **too much** carbohydrate can raise blood sugars. Here are some simple guidelines:

- Cut back on sugary foods, such as regular soda, candy, and desserts. These foods provide a lot of carbohydrate without much nutrition. Sugar-free sodas, sugar-free soft drinks and iced teas, sugar-free gelatin, and sugar-free hard candies may not have much nutrition, but don't raise blood sugars.
- Low carb diets are not advised for diabetes. But foods like bread, pasta, potatoes, and rice should be used with some moderation. Fruits, some vegetables, and milk have carbohydrate too, but should still be part of a healthy food plan. Review "The Plate Method" to see what moderation of these foods looks like.
- Some carbs are better for you than others. Whole grain breads and cereals, brown rice, beans, vegetables, and whole fruits (rather than juices) are high in nutrition and better for your blood sugar control.

**Be low fat** – lower fat food choices can help you lose weight and reduce your blood cholesterol. Choose lean protein like skinless chicken, lean pork, trimmed beef, part skim cheese, dried beans, and lower fat lunch meats. Bake, grill or pan-sear foods rather than fry in fats. Pick 1% or fat-free milk and low fat dairy products. Use healthier fats, like liquid oils (olive, canola, etc.) and nut products (peanut butter, nuts, and nut oils).

**Be sodium smart** – many people with diabetes also have high blood pressure. Watch the salt in your diet by choosing fresh foods over canned when available, rinsing canned foods, adding extra water to canned soups, and using herbs to flavor rather than salt.