Healthy Eating in the Workplace for People with Type 2 Diabetes

A busy workday can make healthy eating and managing Type 2 Diabetes a challenge. Arriving at your workplace ready to eat healthy will set you up for success!

Healthy eating for Type 2 Diabetes helps keep blood glucose (sugar) levels stable and in a healthy range, which can decrease the risk of diabetes complications such as heart disease, kidney, eye, or nerve cell damage.

This fact sheet will help you to eat healthy and manage your diabetes while at work.

Steps you can take

1. Bring a healthy lunch to work as often as you can.
When you pack and bring your lunch to work you can manage your portion sizes and bring healthier foods. Include a variety of foods from all the four food groups: vegetables and fruit, grain products, milk and alternatives and meat and alternatives. See the table below for some healthy food ideas to bring from home.

2. Keep healthy foods at your work.
If you don’t like making lunch at home or if you don’t have time, bring some supplies to work to make your lunch. With keeping healthy foods at work you may be less tempted to go out and buy foods such as muffins, cookies, pizza or French fries. For example, peanut butter, tuna, fruit, whole grain crackers, low-fat milk or yogurt (milk fat less than 2%), nuts and seeds are good choices.

3. Make wise food choices when eating out at work.
Even with your best efforts to pack your own lunch or snacks, there may be days when you buy a meal or snack at your workplace cafeteria or from the vending machine. Here are some tips to make healthier choices:
Cafeteria

- Ask for half of your plate to be filled with salad or steamed cooked vegetables. Divide the rest of your plate equally between meat, poultry, fish or legumes and fibre-rich carbohydrate foods like brown rice or potatoes. This can help you manage your portions and have a higher-fibre and carbohydrate-balanced meal.
- Look for dishes that are steamed, poached, baked, stir-fried or grilled. These cooking methods use less fat than frying.
- Choose broth-type soups or those made with beans, peas, lentils and vegetables.
- Choose a smaller plate rather than a larger plate.
- Take a glass of water to drink with your meal.

Vending Machines
Vending machines often have very limited choices. Look for smaller packages and healthier food options.
Look for:

- unsweetened or calorie-free beverages
- fruit, nut mixes or trail mixes (unsalted if possible)
- low-fat milk and yogurt
sandwiches made with whole grain bread
lower-fat cheese (milk fat less than 20%)
salads with dressings on the side.

Avoid: chocolate bars, chips, cookies and other baked goods.

4. Plan your meals and snacks around your schedule.
Look ahead at your work schedule and plan your day so that you have the chance to eat every four to six hours. If you have a meeting that falls at a time that you should be eating, eat before your meeting or bring your lunch or snack with you. This will help you to manage your blood glucose levels and your appetite.

5. Avoid eating when you are bored or stressed.
If you feel stressed or bored at work, rather than reaching for something to eat, take a break and go for a walk, stand up and stretch, march on the spot or visit a co-worker.

6. Find a place to eat away from your desk.
Try to take a break and eat in a location away from your desk. This way you can focus on enjoying your meal in a more relaxed environment.

7. Include some physical activity during your workday.
Try to take short walks around the office, walk up or down a few flights of stairs or do gentle calf-raises on the spot. Exercise can help with your blood glucose levels.

8. Limit work place ‘treats’.
‘Treats’ around the workplace or at meetings can often be unhealthy foods like high-fat pastries, cakes and cookies. You can suggest fresh fruit, low-fat yogurt and small mini-muffins as healthier options. You can also bring a healthy snack with you to help avoid being tempted. See the table below for healthy meal, snack and beverage ideas.

9. Set a healthy eating goal to help you make healthy choices at work.
Setting a goal is a good place to start toward healthy eating in the workplace. A goal will help you focus on one step that you can take, and when you reach that goal, you can work on another. See Additional Resources for more information about goal setting.
10. Seek support.
Find out whom at work is also managing diabetes or another type of condition and support each other. Go for walks, share healthy recipes and encourage each other.

Healthy Meals, Snacks and Beverages

Enjoy these healthy meals and snacks and beverages at work:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lunch ideas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sandwiches or wraps made with whole-grain breads, lean meat and vegetables</td>
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<tr>
<td>salads made with green, leafy vegetables or grain salads made with lean meat and lots of vegetables - other topping ideas include feta cheese, sliced cucumber, carrot, peppers and onions and unsalted nuts and seeds</td>
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<tr>
<td>whole grain crackers topped with sliced, boiled egg with cut-up carrots on the side</td>
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<td>left over chicken or beef stir-fry and brown rice</td>
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<td>make your own burrito: brown rice beans and vegetables in a wholegrain tortilla</td>
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<td>lower-fat cheese and sliced tomato on a whole grain roll</td>
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<tr>
<td>unsweetened whole grain cereal with low-fat milk and unsalted nuts</td>
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<td>left-over, cooked chicken, beef or pork in a whole-grain pita with lettuce and tomato</td>
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<tr>
<td>home-made or ready-to-eat, sodium reduced bean, peas or lentil and vegetable soup with whole grain roll</td>
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<tr>
<td>salmon mixed with left over brown rice, chopped carrots and oil and vinegar dressing</td>
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<td>peanut butter on whole-grain bread with sliced banana</td>
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<tr>
<td>mixed bean salad with chopped cucumber and onion, topped with an oil and vinegar dressing with pita and hummus on the side</td>
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For the best way to fit these ideas into your diabetes plan see a Registered Dietitian at a Diabetes Education program.

**Special considerations:**

- Understand how to avoid a low blood glucose and be prepared at work to deal with a low blood glucose if it happens. See Additional Resources below for more information.
**Additional Resources**

- How to Set SMART Goals

- Healthy Snacks for Type 2 Diabetes

*These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.*

**Notes**

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