

Health Awareness

A County Health Pool Publication



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Diabetes and Diet, the Myths

Diabetes is widely recognized as one of the leading causes of death and disability in the United States. However, diabetes is likely to be under reported as the underlying cause of death on death certificates. About 65 percent of deaths among those with diabetes are attributed to heart disease and stroke.

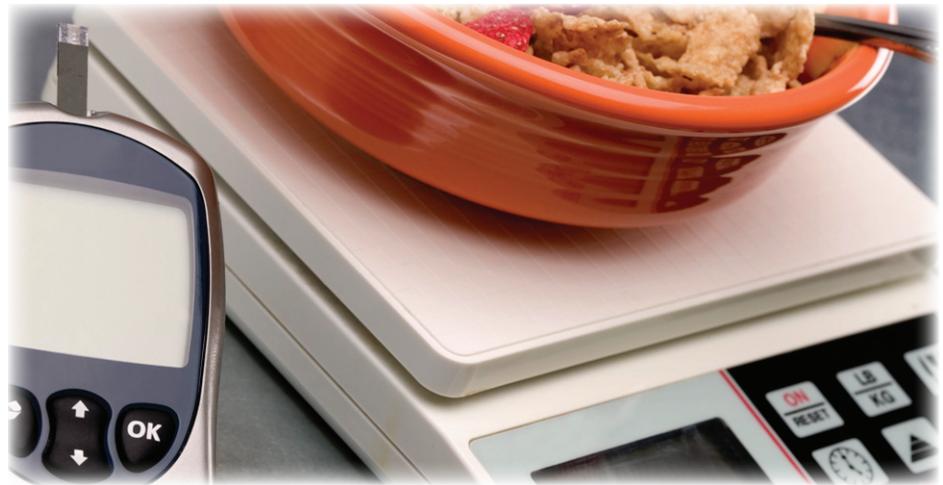
Diabetes is associated with long-term complications that affect almost every part of the body. The disease often leads to blindness, heart and blood vessel disease, stroke, kidney failure, amputations, and nerve damage.

What is diabetes?

Diabetes is a disorder of metabolism--the way our bodies use digested food for growth and energy.

To understand what happens when you have diabetes, keep these things in mind: Your body breaks down much of the food you eat into glucose, a type of sugar needed to power your cells. A hormone called insulin is made in the pancreas. Insulin helps the cells in the body use glucose for fuel.

If you have diabetes, you will need to plan your meals. But the general principal is simple: Following a



“diabetes diet” means choosing food that will work along with your activities and any medications to keep your blood sugar levels as close to normal as possible.

Will you need to make changes to what you now eat? Probably. But perhaps not as many as you anticipate.

Myths About Diabetes Diets

Perhaps you have said, or heard someone else express, one of these thoughts:

- Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.
- You have to give up all your favorite foods when you're on a diabetes diet.
- Carbohydrates are bad for diabetes

- Diet foods are the best choices for diabetes.

These statements are all myths about diabetes diets. Lets take a closer look at these myths to find out the facts about diabetes and diet.

Myth, Eating too much sugar causes diabetes.

Fact, The causes are not totally understood. What is known is that simply eating too much sugar is unlikely to cause diabetes. Instead, diabetes begins when something disrupts your body's ability to turn the food you eat into energy.

Myth, You have to give up all your favorite foods when you're on a diabetes diet.

(Over)

Diabetes and Diet, the Myths (Continued)

Fact, There is no reason to give up your favorite foods on a diabetes diet. Instead, try:

- Changing the way your favorite foods are prepared.
- Changing the other foods you usually eat along with your favorite foods.
- Reducing the serving sizes of your favorite foods.
- Using your favorite foods as a reward for following your meal plans.

Myth, Carbohydrates are bad for diabetes

Fact, Carbohydrates are good for diabetes. They form the foundation of a healthy diabetes diet – or of any healthy diet.

Carbohydrates have the greatest effect on blood sugar levels, which is why you are asked to monitor how much carbohydrate you eat when following a diabetes diet.

However, carbohydrate foods contain many essential nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, and fiber. So one diabetes diet tip is to choose those with the most nutrients, like whole-grain breads and baked goods, and high-fiber fruits and vegetables. You may find it easier to select the best carbs if you meet with a dietitian.

Myth, Diet foods are the best choices for diabetes.

Fact, Just because a food is labeled as a “diet” food does not mean it is a better choice for people with diabetes. In fact,

Benefits Corner

New Diabetic Eyecare Program

VSP has a new Diabetic Eyecare program available to CHP Members that are enrolled in the VSP Vision plan and that have been diagnosed with Type I Diabetes. The Diabetic Eyecare program provides coverage for additional medical eyecare services targeted toward members with Type 1 Diabetes. Members will continue to receive routine eyecare from their VSP doctor, and now, they will also get the follow-up medical eyecare they need from their VSP doctor. Members with diabetes who are identified in VSP’s system will also receive a reminder letter from VSP 14 months after their last eye exam.

In addition, routine eye exams are also important for your eyes and for your overall well-being. A VSP doctor can catch the earliest signs of serious eye and health conditions, like glaucoma and high cholesterol. If you are a covered member under the CHP vision plan, take advantage of the routine eye exams that are available on an annual basis.

For more information on VSP and the coverage that is available, please call VSP at 1-800-877-7195 or online at www.vsp.com

If you have any other questions regarding VSP or other CHP Benefits, please contact your CHP Benefits Administrator at 303-861-0507.

“diet” foods can be expensive and no more healthy than foods found in the “regular” sections of the grocery store, or foods you prepare yourself.

As with any food you choose, read the labels carefully to find out if the ingredients and amount of calories are good choices for you. If you have doubts, ask your diabetes educator or a dietitian for advice.

Now that you know the facts about diabetes diets, you can take steps to learn even more about making wise food choices. Together with exercise and medication, you can use what you eat as an effective tool for keeping your blood sugar levels within normal

ranges (The American Diabetes Association (ADA) recommends that you keep your blood sugar levels at: 90 mg/dL to 130 mg/dL before meals and less than 180 mg/dL 1 to 2 hours after meals when using a blood sample drawn from a fingertip (plasma blood sample)). That is the best diabetes diet of all.

Sources: Webmd.com and Healthwise

