



Diabetes Friendly Foods

If you're pre-diabetic or have been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, a change in diet is usually recommended along with exercise and possibly medication. But, there's no need to despair! You can eat your way to better health with plenty of delicious whole and minimally-processed foods.

Whole foods are those that haven't been changed significantly from their natural state (such as a fresh fruit or vegetable), while minimally-processed foods go through very little processing with few or no added ingredients. These foods include oatmeal and other whole grains, pasta, olive oil, and milk, just to name a few. Foods that are canned, frozen, or pre-cut in the store, can fall into this category, too, when they don't have added sugars, salt or sauces.

Highly-processed foods, on the other hand, go through multiple steps; because they've been already so thoroughly processed at a factory, your body in turn processes them very quickly, causing potential spikes in your blood sugar. Adding to their drawbacks, they often have high amounts of added sugar, fat, and sodium, along with chemicals to improve their texture or shelf life.

The following are just some of the whole foods you can choose for optimum health (and lots of delicious eating):

Legumes	Legumes (beans, lentils, peas) are a food budget's best friend. Not only are they economical, they're deliciously nutritious, too. Filled with fiber and protein they lend themselves to a variety of dishes, hot or cold. If you use canned beans, be sure to look for low-sodium products, or rinse the beans thoroughly before use (this can help reduce sodium by up to 40%).
Dark Leafy Greens	Dark leafy greens, such as kale, collard and mustard greens, spinach, chard, arugula, and red and green leaf lettuces are perfect salad partners, and they also team up nicely in soups, pasta and whole grain dishes. Nutritionally they contain vitamins and minerals and fiber.
Non-starchy Vegetables	Non-starchy vegetables, such as carrots, onions, mushrooms, peppers, and tomatoes, are filled with fiber and phytochemicals and are delicious raw, roasted or sautéed. Many veggies make easy on-the-go snacks: just slice them and place in an airtight plastic bag or container, refrigerate and they're ready whenever you are. Veggies make great dippers for salsa or hummus, too.
Starchy Vegetables	Starchy vegetables – usually the root, bulb or kernel of a plant – include corn, sweet potatoes, potatoes, parsnips, pumpkin, peas, and squash. They tend to raise blood sugar levels more than non-starchy vegetables, but have a role in a healthy diet, in moderation, because they are great sources of vitamins, minerals and fiber.
Fruits	Fruits are rich in fiber and antioxidants and can be enjoyed with a meal, as a snack or as a dessert. Berries, citrus, cantaloupe, watermelon, pineapple, peaches and plums are great choices to satisfy your sweet tooth while also supplying important nutrients. Fruits and vegetables can be fresh, frozen or canned. When buying canned foods, read the ingredient list and avoid any with <i>added</i> sugars such as syrup or cane sugar, chemical preservatives, or <i>added</i> sodium.



<p>Whole Grains</p>	<p>Whole grains are full of vitamins, minerals and fiber. Whole grains are grains with their nutritious germ, endosperm, and bran intact (and not removed during processing). They help metabolize fats and can also help keep blood sugar levels stable. When purchasing whole grains, be sure to look for the “Whole Grain Stamp,” or check the ingredient list to ensure whole grains are in the product. Caution: the word “multigrain” does not mean whole grain; it simply means more than one grain was used – and those grains may not be whole at all.</p>
<p>Healthy Fats</p>	<p>Yes, you can enjoy healthy fats, too. Good fats, known as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, help lower bad cholesterol and are found in foods such as olives, olive and canola oils, avocado and avocado oil, sesame seeds and tahini paste, seafood, as well as nuts such as almonds, peanuts, pecans and cashews. Instead of cooking and baking with saturated fats such as lard and butter, try olive or canola oils.</p> <p>Did you know that many vegetables are fat-soluble meaning their vitamins and nutrients are more easily absorbed into our cells when they’re eaten with a healthy fat? For example, dipping carrots in hummus, or drizzling leafy greens with olive oil, helps our bodies better absorb vitamins A, D, E and K found in the vegetables.</p>
<p>Nuts and Seeds</p>	<p>Nuts and seeds provide heart-healthy fats, vitamins and fiber and have anti-inflammatory properties that can help prevent insulin resistance. There are as many nuts and seeds as there are ways to enjoy them. They can be eaten out of hand as a snack, quickly toasted in the oven or sautéed on the stove to bring out their flavors and crunch, sprinkled over salads, ground into butters, dips, or flour, used as a thickener for sauces or soups, or as a coating for oven-roasted fish or chicken. Because of their fat content, portion size is key; a handful of nuts or seeds, or two tablespoons of nut butter, is considered one serving.</p>
<p>Lean Protein</p>	<p>Lean protein sources include turkey and chicken, lean cuts of beef, as well as seafood. Avoid deep frying these foods and cook them with olive or canola oils instead.</p>
<p>Plain Greek Yogurt</p>	<p>Plain Greek yogurt is thick, tangy and creamy and has no <i>added</i> sugar. It has more protein than regular yogurt so you may feel fuller longer after you eat it. It makes a terrific snack, and because of its low glycemic index it’s a good way to start your day. For breakfast, add some chopped fruit or sprinkle some nuts on top for a little sweetness or crunch or enjoy a splash of pure vanilla extract or a dash of cinnamon for extra flavor.</p>
<p>Herbs and Spices</p>	<p>Herbs and spices are little gems in a jar to help your meals go from dull to devilishly delicious. Try new combinations to perk up favorite recipes and use in place of salt.</p>

Once you introduce your taste buds to the real flavor of these whole foods you’ll find that you’ll feel more satisfied with less. You’ll be less likely to reach for highly-processed foods filled with unhealthy fats, chemical additives and added sugars and sodium, saving you extra calories, too.

Be sure to talk with your registered dietitian nutritionist or healthcare provider about developing an eating plan that meets your needs and goals.