

# Diabetes Lunch Ideas

Lunch is often a difficult meal because you only have a limited amount of time to eat and few food options. How often do you skip lunch because you're too busy, grab fast food or an energy bar because it's quick, or end up eating at your desk? No wonder so many of us experience an afternoon energy slump and are starving by the time we get home from work.

Since the current nutrition guidelines for diabetes management clearly state that there is no one-size-fits-all meal pattern for people with diabetes, you need to figure out what works best for you based on your hunger level, food preferences, and blood sugar management plan. Here are some ideas to get you started...

**1. Fill half your plate with non-starchy vegetables** for essential vitamins and minerals, fiber, and water content that helps you feel full and satisfied. Any vegetables except parsnips, plantains, potato, sweet potato, pumpkin, winter squash, green peas, and corn are non-starchy vegetables. Non-starchy vegetables contain approximately 5 grams of carbohydrate per serving, giving you the opportunity to enjoy larger portions with minimal impact on your blood sugar levels. Choose a variety of different types of non-starchy vegetables in different colors for a visually appealing plate that's packed with nutrition.

**2. Fill ¼ of your plate with a good source of protein.** For a healthy heart, include fish or seafood twice each week. Enjoy skinless chicken or turkey more often than red meat, and choose the leanest cuts of red meat like chuck, rib, rump roast, round, sirloin, cubed,

flank, porterhouse, T-bone steak, or tenderloin. Plant-based protein foods like legumes (dried beans and peas such as lentils, split peas, chickpeas, hummus, kidney beans, and pinto beans) contain 15 grams of carbohydrate per ½ cup and are good sources of fiber.

**3. The last ¼ of the plate is for grains and starchy foods** like starchy vegetables or whole grains such as 100% whole grain wheat, brown rice, whole grain barley and quinoa. Whole grains contain nutrients and fiber from the entire grain. Read food labels carefully, since many breads, rolls, and crackers are labeled as "made with" or "containing" whole grains and aren't the most nutrient-dense choice. Grains typically contain 15 grams of carbohydrate per serving; read the nutrition facts label for the most accurate information.

4. Depending on your food preferences and diabetes management plan, you may want to **include a piece of fresh fruit or ½ cup of unsweetened canned fruit.** If you enjoy something sweet with lunch, fruit is an excellent choice; for the 15 grams of carbohydrate per serving you also get the benefit of several vitamins, minerals, and fiber.

**5. Choose a beverage.** Plain, unflavored water is the best beverage choice because it's calorie and carbohydrate-free. Spend your calorie and carbohydrate budget on whole foods, not beverages, and choose calorie-free beverages like plain tea or coffee.

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