

FACT SHEET:

Gestational diabetes

Healthy eating

Why do you need good food?

When you have gestational diabetes, what you eat is important for:

- good blood glucose (sugar) levels
- your growing baby
- staying healthy

Food gives you energy. This energy comes from carbohydrates, protein, and fats.

There are a lot of other things in food that you need to make the body work, such as vitamins and minerals. To get the nutrients you need, be sure to:

- Eat a good variety of foods to get everything you need for a strong mum and baby. Check with your healthcare team how much you need from each of the different food groups.
- Have regular small meals – breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- Have some carbohydrate food at each meal, but not too much.
- Limit takeaway food.

You need to eat enough healthy food for baby to grow strong and healthy. If you eat well and stay active, and your blood glucose levels are still too high, your healthcare team may consider starting medication or insulin as your body is not able to make the required insulin needed.

Carbohydrate foods

A dietitian can tell you how much carbohydrate to eat at each meal.

Carbohydrates give your body energy. They are made of sugars linked together in chains. Some are short chains (e.g. milk, fruit), some are long chains (e.g. bread, pasta, potatoes). Your body breaks down the carbohydrates into glucose (a type of sugar) which then travels in your blood to give you energy. Though all carbohydrates are broken down into sugars, not all foods that are high in carbohydrates taste sweet (e.g. potatoes, bread, etc).

If you eat too many carbohydrates at one meal, it can raise your blood glucose levels.

There are four main types of food that have carbohydrates:

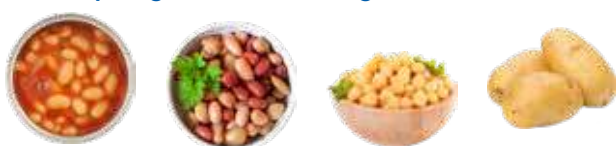
Bread and cereals



Have one cup or scoop of cooked rice, pasta or noodles with a meal.

Bread and cereals contain carbohydrates and the wholegrain/brown types give you extra fibre and vitamins.

Starchy vegetables and legumes



Bread and cereals, starchy vegetables, and legumes all contain carbohydrates. Legumes include lentils, red kidney beans, baked beans, and chick peas.



Fruit – have 2 serves/day



A serve is a hand-sized piece – a medium orange or banana, or 1 cup of tinned fruit (in juice, not syrup). Fruit is a good snack between meals.

Fruit gives you carbohydrates, vitamins, fibre and antioxidants.

Cheese, milk, yoghurt – have 2.5 serves/day



A serve is a small tub (200g) of yoghurt 1 glass (250ml) of milk or 2 slices (40g) of hard cheese.

If you experience an upset stomach when drinking milk, try lactose free or soy milk with added calcium.

Dairy gives you carbohydrates, calcium for building bones and protein for building muscles and organs.

Low carbohydrate foods



These foods don't increase your blood glucose levels.

Most vegetables don't contain a lot of carbohydrates so they don't increase your blood glucose levels, they have fibre and vitamins and can help fill you up.

Chicken, meat, nuts, and fish



- A small serve each day.
- These foods don't raise your blood glucose levels. They give you protein and iron.

Fats



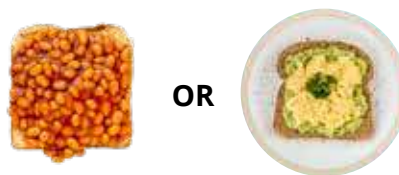
- Cut fat off meat and take skin off chicken before you cook it.
- Cook in small amounts of a good oil (eg. canola or olive).

Remember

- Limit takeaways.

Meal examples

Breakfast – choose 2:



Snacks – 1 of:



Lunch – 1 of:



Evening – 1 of:



How to use a food scale

We recommend you purchase a digital scale as it offers exact measurements without guesswork. When selecting a scale choose one that has numbers you can easily read, and is within your budget.

Read the manual that comes with your scale. A simple scale might not come with a manual but some digital scales have advanced features like calorie measurements and nutritional values. Reading the instructions will help you understand your scale's particular features.

1. Place your bowl on the scale and tare it to zero. Depending on the type of food scale you've purchased, this could be as simple as turning the scale on and waiting until the display registers "0."
2. Place your food portion in the bowl on the scale, you will see the weight displayed automatically. Follow manufacturer's directions to obtain the correct reading.

Measuring cups and spoons

Use Australian Standard measuring cups and spoons. The plastic ones found in supermarkets and kitchenware shops are a perfect choice.

- When measuring liquids, place the jug onto a flat surface and bend down to check at eye level.
- When measuring dry ingredients, dip the cup or spoon into the food and lift out. Use the edge of a knife to scrape across the surface, removing excess ingredients so the surface is flat.



Acknowledgement of Country

Diabetes Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this Country. We pay the utmost respect to them, their cultures and to their Elders, past and present. We extend that respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today. Diabetes Australia is committed to improving health outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by diabetes and those at risk.

About the artwork: A Pathway to Health

By starting this journey together, we can move towards healthier communities for future generations and take control of our family's health. By yarning and understanding diabetes together, we are strong and can get through this together. This painting was created for Diabetes Australia by artist Keisha Leon (Thomason), an Aboriginal Graphic Designer and Artist. Keisha is a proud Waanyi-Kalkadoon (Mount Isa, Queensland) and Chinese woman.

This information is intended as a guide only. It should not replace individual medical advice and if you have any concerns about your health or further questions, you should contact your health professional.



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