

Nutrition for Pregnancy and Good Blood Glucose Control



The food choices you make during your pregnancy are very important for the health of you and your developing baby. Your food will affect your blood glucose levels and it can provide many nutrients required for a healthy baby. You need enough glucose to meet your energy needs every day but not too much as that will cause high blood sugar. What and how much food you eat, and when you eat are vital to achieve blood glucose control. There are two main goals of a meal plan during pregnancy; 1) To provide the right combination of foods to keep you from having too much or too little glucose in the blood, and 2) To provide the nutrients needed for a healthy pregnancy.

WHEN: You may find that eating on a regular schedule will help with controlling blood sugars. Therefore, following through with the times recommended by your health care team is important. In pregnancy it is not a good idea to go without food for more than 8-10 hours. As a result, a snack before bed snack may be needed. When taking insulin this bedtime snack is vital.

WHAT: It is of very high importance to follow the meal plan that was worked out for you. If the meal plan is not followed it will be much more difficult to keep the blood sugar level where it needs to be. If you find problems with the meal plan, please talk with the dietitian and discuss possible changes before making changes on your own. Knowing how different kinds of food affect your blood glucose can help you to make the right choices when you plan your meals.

Carbohydrates: Fruits and starchy vegetables, bread, cereals, and pasta are carbohydrates. Among the grain products, whole-grain and whole-wheat are best. Recommended fruits include citrus (oranges, grapefruits) as well as apples, bananas, guavas, mangos and strawberries. It is suggested that you consume 2-3 fruits per day and 6-11 servings of grain products each day.



Carbohydrates cause the greatest increase in your blood glucose. As a result the amounts of carbohydrates suggested in your meal plan need to be followed very carefully. Carbohydrates are an important part of the healthy diet and do not need to be avoided, -just eaten in the amounts suggested. Having the same amount of carbohydrate at the same meal Sunday through Saturday is important. For example, if you eat one amount of carbohydrate at lunch one day, then a different amount at lunch the next day, the response of the blood glucose will be harder to predict making medication changes more difficult. to do. In certain cases, varying the amounts at a meal time from day to day can be done successfully. The dietitian can tell you more about this.



Non-starchy vegetables also contain carbohydrate but much less per serving than other carbohydrate foods. They are rich in fiber, and vitamins and minerals; and, are generally low in calories. Try to have at least three to five servings every day, - more if possible. A serving is considered one-half cup cooked or one cup raw is considered a serving. Dark green veggies -such as broccoli, spinach or greens -and dark yellow or orange veggies -such as carrots and squash -have more essential nutrients than lighter colored

vegetables. For the pregnant woman, vegetables play a very important role. An intake of vegetables helps provide many of the nutrients needed for the baby such as folic acid and vitamins A and C. In addition, a diet rich in vegetables (especially non-starchy vegetables) has been shown to help fight many diseases including heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Sugary foods are high in carbohydrates even for small portions. In pregnancy they seem to make the blood sugar increase more than other carbohydrates. They are not a good source of vitamins or minerals and usually contain a lot of fat. It is best to limit the intake of these sugary foods during pregnancy.

Protein: Many other foods have protein besides meat. Examples are eggs, milk, cheese, and dried beans. It takes the body a little longer to turn protein into glucose. Protein-rich foods have the added advantage of containing iron and B vitamins. Some protein foods can be high in cholesterol and saturated fat. The leaner the protein the less likely it is to be high in cholesterol and saturated fat. Good choices are lean meats, "loins" (such as tenderloin, sirloin, etc)- and "rounds" (such as ground round, round steak, etc.), fish, eggs, beans, low-fat cheese and tofu. Poorer choices, because they contain a high percentage of fat, are fried meats, hot dogs, sausage, spare ribs, and especially bacon. During pregnancy an intake of 5-8 ounces of lean protein per day is suggested.



Fat: Different kinds of fat make up the rest of your meal plan. While fat alone doesn't tend to increase blood glucose, fat added to carbohydrate can make the blood glucose stay at its peak a much longer time. Because of this, a diet low in fat is suggested. There are three types of fat generally found in foods. Monounsaturated fat comes from sources such as nuts, canola and olive oil. When cooking with oil it is best to use monounsaturated oils. Polyunsaturated fats are found in corn and safflower oils. Saturated fat is usually solid at room temperature and is found in butter and red meat. Most Americans eat too much saturated fat. This could be changed by eating leaner meats, decreasing the intake of fried foods, and chips, many types of candy and or fast foods. During pregnancy this is especially important as the nutrients consumed need to be from healthier selections.

Calcium: Four servings a day of milk and milk products are suggested. These may include: 1 cup of milk, yogurt or cottage cheese; two 1-inch cubes of cheese; 1/2 cup sugar-free pudding or custard; 1-1/2 cups soup made with milk; or, 1/2 cup ice milk or low-fat frozen yogurt. If you can not tolerate these foods speak to the dietitian about other options.

Review of main points:

1. Carbohydrates are important! Follow the amounts on your meal plan very closely.
2. Don't forget your pre-bedtime snack. It's vital!
3. Have at least 3-5 fruits and vegetables each day.
4. Avoid fried foods and saturated fat.
5. Have four servings of milk and milk products each day.