

Food choices when you have diabetes during pregnancy

Diabetes Service/Dietetics Service

Information for Patients

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The aim of this leaflet is to help you learn:

- which foods raise your blood glucose (sugar) levels
- what you can do to help manage them when you have diabetes during pregnancy (gestational diabetes).

This is important to prevent complications related to high blood glucose during your pregnancy.

If you have gestational diabetes while you are pregnant, you might need to change your food and exercise habits. This can usually help, but sometimes you might need to take medicine like tablets or insulin to manage it.

What can I do to manage my blood glucose?

- Use an artificial sweetener instead of sugar such as sweetex or candarel.
- Choose diet or no added sugar drinks.
- Do not choose fruit juices, full sugar fizzy drinks or energy drinks.



If your blood glucose is above target after meals think about:

- Having a smaller portion of carbohydrate food next time
- Try not to have too many starchy foods together in 1 meal. This means not having things like rice and chapatti together, or garlic bread with pasta dishes.
- Fill up on lean protein (such as chicken, fish, beans and legumes), vegetables and salad.
- Pair together foods with carbohydrates, like bread or rice, along with foods that have protein, like cheese or meat.
- Include healthy snacks between meals to spread out the carbohydrate (see page 5 for snack ideas).
- Try walking for 20 to 30 minutes after eating

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Foods that raise your blood glucose (carbohydrates)

Sugar and sugary drinks	Dairy	Treats	Fruit	Starchy carbohydrates
Full sugar fizzy drinks	Milk	Cakes	Dried	Bread/ chapattis
Full sugar squash or cordial	Yoghurt	Chocolate	Fresh/ frozen	Pasta/ noodles/ rice
Fruit juice		Biscuits	Tinned in juice	Potatoes, sweet potatoes, yam and plantain
Sugar in tea/ coffee		Sweets		Cereals
Hot chocolate/ milkshakes/latte/ malt drinks such as Ovaltine		Ice-cream		Pastry such as pies/ sausage rolls/ pasties
Honey / jaggery		Custard/ full-sugar jelly		Flour
		Puddings		Breaded/ battered foods
				Sev/ ghatia/ bombay mix and other Indian savoury snacks
				Crisps
				Take-away/ fast food

Foods that do not raise your blood glucose

Vegetables	Protein	Fats and oils
Vegetables (except potatoes, sweet potatoes, yam and plantain)	Meat	Butter/ margarine
Salads	Fish	Cheese
	Eggs	Oil
	Pulses/lentils	Mayonnaise
	Quorn	
	Tofu	
	Nuts/ seeds	

Glycaemic index

Some carbohydrate foods are broken down into glucose more quickly than others. Choosing slow release carbohydrates may help to improve your blood glucose levels. These are known as **low glycaemic** index. Remember that even though they turn to glucose more slowly they will still affect blood glucose so stick to small portions.

Have low glycaemic index foods instead of higher glycaemic index foods. Examples of these can be found in the following table:

High glycaemic index foods	Lower glycaemic index foods
Breads made from refined flour: white/ wholemeal bread, chapatti	Seeded wholegrain bread
Mashed potatoes	Sweet potato / new potatoes with the skin on (avoid mashing)
White pasta	Wholegrain pasta
White rice, jasmine rice	Basmati rice

Eating more protein with your meals, like meat, fish, beans and lentils, will help you manage the rise in your blood glucose as it reduces the glycaemic index of the meal.

Getting the portion sizes right

Using hand measures can help you find the right portion size of the different foods to eat at each meal.

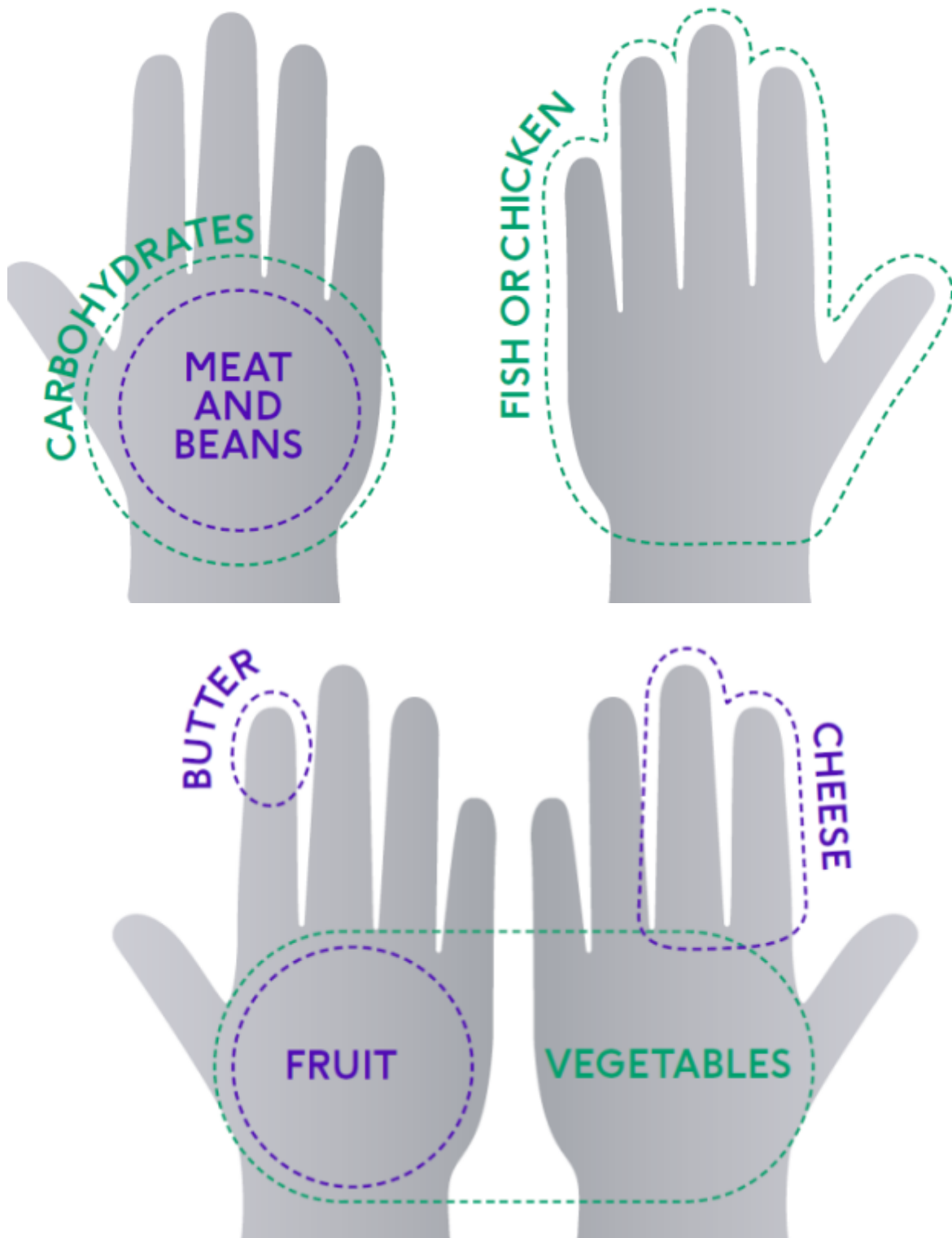
For example:

- 1 hand size portion of beans, pulses, fish, eggs, meat and other proteins
- 2 finger lengths of cheese
- 1 teaspoon of butter or oil
- 1 fist-sized baked potato
- 1 handful of uncooked pasta or rice
- 1 handful of fruit
- 2 heaped handfuls of vegetables

Below are image provided by the British Heart foundation. More information on the right portion sizes can be found on their website:

[Food portions - Heart Matters magazine - BHF](#)

<https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/healthy-living/healthy-eating/healthy-eating-toolkit/food-portions>



Snack ideas

1 hour after your meal, once you have done your blood glucose test, you may have a snack if you feel hungry. Try having:

A palm size piece of fruit	Vegetable sticks and dip (Such as cheese, bean, tuna)	Kale or vegetable crisps	2 granary crackers or oatcakes with cheese	Sugar free jelly with berries
Small pot of Greek yoghurt	2 plain biscuits	Small bowl of plain popcorn	1 slice of toast with peanut butter	Small handful of unsalted nuts

Example meal plan

8am	Breakfast	Greek yoghurt with 1 tablespoon of oats and a handful of berries, unsalted nuts and chia seeds or vegetable omelette with a slice of granary bread
10.30am	Mid morning snack	Handful of mixed berries and unsalted nuts or vegetable sticks (such as pepper and carrots) and hummus
1pm	Lunch	A sandwich with 2 slices of granary bread low fat margarine, chicken/cheese, sweetcorn, lettuce, low fat mayonnaise.
3.30pm	Mid afternoon snack	Cheese and 2 granary crackers or a small apple with a tablespoon of natural peanut butter.
6.30pm	Evening meal	Small portion of pasta with bolognaise and a side salad. or chicken/ tofu curry with vegetables and rice
8.30pm	Evening snack	Small pot of Greek yoghurt

Exercise

Along with making changes to your diet, exercise can also help you to control your blood glucose levels.

Walking after meals will lower blood glucose and can help you to achieve the target range.

- Try walking after meals, aim for 30 minutes when possible or as much as you are able to walk.
- Aim for 150 minutes of activity per week.



Healthy eating

It is important to follow a healthy balanced diet during your pregnancy. Aim to have at least 5 portions of fruits and vegetables each day. You can do this by increasing the vegetables at meal times to half your plate.

Eat less salt, sugar and saturated fats (animal fats, butter, ghee).



Healthy changes you make now are worth continuing after pregnancy

After your baby is born your diabetes should go away. Your risk of getting type 2 diabetes later in life is higher.

How can I reduce my risk of having type 2 diabetes in the future?

- **Having a healthy weight:** If your Body Mass Index (BMI) score is above 25kg/m² (or 23kg/m² if you are of African-Caribbean or Asian ethnicity), then aiming to lose at least 5% of your body weight after your baby is born will reduce your risk. This can be done by reducing the amount of calories you eat, and moving more. For more information about BMI, calculating your BMI and knowing your target weight, follow the link below to the NHS website:
[BMI calculator | Check your BMI - NHS | Please fill in your details \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/)
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator/>
- **Be active:** Aim for 30 minutes of exercise a day or 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity a week.
- **Eat a healthy diet:**
 - Eat more fruits, vegetables and wholegrains.
 - Avoid sugary drinks.
 - Eat less refined carbohydrates such as white bread, cakes, desserts etc.
 - Eat less red and processed meat.
 - Have less fat in your diet. In particular saturated fat such as butter, fatty meat, ghee and full fat dairy.

For more information on how to keep a balanced diet follow the link below to the NHS website:

[Eating a balanced diet - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-eat-a-balanced-diet/eating-a-balanced-diet/)

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/eat-well/how-to-eat-a-balanced-diet/eating-a-balanced-diet/>

You can be referred to a Diabetes Prevention Programme after pregnancy . If you are interested in this programme, please click on the link below for more information. You can speak with your GP to ask to be referred:

<https://preventing-diabetes.co.uk/leicester/>

Contact details:

Diabetes Dietetic Team

Diabetes Outpatients Department

Leicester General Hospital

Gwendolen Rd,

Leicester, LE5 4PW

0116 258 4919

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો
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Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference: none

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk