

Sweets and Desserts for People with Diabetes

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These days, eating sweets isn't "cheating"—it's a choice. People with diabetes can eat sweets and still keep their blood glucose (sugar) levels on track. These options are all available for sweetening your foods:

- sugar and other sweeteners with calories (such as honey and brown sugar)
- reduced-calorie sweeteners (such as isomalt and sorbitol)
- low-calorie sweeteners (such as aspartame and sucralose)

What you can learn from this brochure:

- how to fit in sweets and still reach your blood glucose targets
- how to read labels for carbohydrates
- the advantages and disadvantages of the various kinds of sweeteners

Sugar and other sweeteners with calories

What's the latest word: Should people with diabetes eat foods with sugar?

In the past, people with diabetes were warned to avoid sugar. Experts thought that eating sugar would rapidly increase blood glucose, resulting in levels that were too high. Some people even thought that eating sugar caused diabetes, an idea that we now know isn't true. Research has shown that sugar has the same effect on blood glucose levels as other carbohydrates, also called carbs, such as bread or potatoes. Calorie for calorie, sugar raises blood glucose about the same amount as other carbohydrates. Now experts agree that you can

eat foods with sugar as long as you work them into your meal plan as you would any other carb-containing food. The same guidelines apply to other sweeteners with calories, including brown sugar, honey, and molasses.

Of course, most sweets and desserts don't provide the important vitamins and minerals found in more healthful foods, so you'll want to make sure you're still getting the nutrients you need. Many sweets, in addition to having carbs, also have fat and are high in calories.

If you like sweets but also want to lose weight, you can try these tips:

- Eat a small serving of something special such as your favorite dessert instead of a large serving of something ordinary.
- When you're eating out, split desserts with a friend or family member.
- Cut back on the amounts of sugar and fat in your favorite recipes.
- Try new recipes for lower-calorie sweets.
- Satisfy your sweet tooth with fresh or dried fruit.
- Choose lower-calorie, lower-fat versions of your favorite desserts.
- Use a low-calorie sweetener instead of sugar for your coffee or tea.

How can I have sweets and still keep my blood glucose on target?

The key to keeping your blood glucose on target is to substitute small portions of sweets for other carb-containing foods in your meals and snacks.

Carb-containing foods include bread, tortillas, rice, crackers, cereal, fruit, juice, milk, yogurt, potatoes, corn, and peas. For many people, having about 45 to 60 grams of carb at each meal and 15 to 30 grams at snack times is about right. Serving sizes make a difference—take a look at the serving size guide below for some common sweets.

Food	Serving Size	Number of Carb Grams
Brownie	2-inch square (about 1 oz.)	15 grams
Cake, unfrosted	2-inch square (about 1 oz.)	15 grams
Cookie or sandwich cookie	2 small (about 2/3 oz.)	15 grams
Fruit juice bars, frozen, 100% juice	1 bar (3 oz.)	15 grams
Ice cream	1/2 cup	15 grams
Pudding, sugar-free	1/2 cup	15 grams
Cake, frosted	2-inch square (about 2 oz.)	30 grams
Doughnut, glazed	1 medium (2 oz.)	30 grams
Pumpkin, custard, or sweet potato pie	1/8 of an 8-inch pie	30 grams
Baklava	2- x 3-inch piece	45 grams
Flan (caramel custard)	1 cup	45 grams
Fruit pie, 2 crusts	1/6 of an 8-inch pie	45 grams
Rice pudding	1/2 cup	45 grams

To include a sweet with your meal, you can cut back on the other carb foods at that same meal.

Example. You'd like to have cookies with your lunch. Your lunch is a turkey sandwich with 2 slices of bread. Your first step is to identify the carb foods in your meal. Bread is a carb. You decide to swap 2 slices of bread for 2 slices of low-calorie bread and have the cookies—it's an even trade. Your total amount of carbohydrate remains the same for the meal.

Lunch <u>without</u> cookies	Grams of carb	Lunch <u>with</u> cookies	Grams of carb
Turkey sandwich with 2 slices of bread	30 grams	Turkey sandwich with 2 slices of low-calorie bread	15 grams
		2 small chocolate chip cookies	15 grams
Total: 30 grams		Total: 30 grams	

My plan for including sweets

List your favorite desserts. Then write down examples of carb-containing foods in your meals and snacks that could be traded for sweets.

Desserts:

Other carb-containing foods to trade for dessert:

Example:

Dessert	Trade for
1/2 cup ice cream (15 grams)	1/3 cup rice (15 grams)

What to check in the Nutrition Facts

You can also use the Nutrition Facts label on foods to guide you. The first thing to check is the serving size. The second is the total carbohydrate. The total carbohydrate tells you how much carbohydrate is in one serving of the food.

Oatmeal cookie	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1 large cookie (25.0g) Servings per container: 10	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 100	Calories from Fat 30
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 3.5g	5%
Saturated Fat 1.0g	5%
Cholesterol 3mg	1%
Sodium 100mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 17g	6%
Dietary Fiber 0.7g	3%
Sugars 9.0g	
Protein 1.0g	

If you eat more than 1 serving, the amount of carbohydrate that you count will also increase. For example, if you eat 1 oatmeal cookie, you will be eating 17 grams of carbohydrate. But if you eat 2 oatmeal cookies, you will be eating _____ grams of carbohydrate.*

*You'll find the answer on the back page.

What else can I learn from food labels?

Foods labeled as sugar-free, no sugar added, reduced sugar, and dietetic still contain carbohydrate. When you check the amount of sugars (listed as “Sugars” under “Total Carbohydrate”) in the Nutrition Facts on the label, keep in mind that the total carbohydrate includes both added sugars and naturally occurring sugars, such as the natural sugar in raisins. That’s why it’s more helpful to check the total carbohydrates.

Reduced-calorie sweeteners

What are sugar alcohols?

Sugar alcohols are one type of reduced-calorie sweetener and are used in sugar-free candies, chewing gum, and desserts. They provide about half the calories of sugars and other carbohydrates. Isomalt, maltitol, mannitol, sorbitol, and xylitol are examples of sugar alcohols. Even though they are called sugar alcohols, they do not contain alcohol. Sometimes sugar alcohols can cause diarrhea, especially in children. Many people think that foods with sugar alcohols are “free foods.” This is not true!

Tips for Carb Counting and Sugar Alcohols

Sugar alcohols don’t raise blood glucose as much as the same amount of other carbohydrates. To figure out the amount of carbohydrate you should count for a food with sugar alcohols, follow these tips:

- subtract half of the sugar alcohol grams from the total carbohydrate
- count the remaining grams

For Example

Portion: 1 bar

Total carbohydrate 15 grams	Sugar Alcohol 6 grams
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One bar counts as 12 grams carbohydrate (15–3=12)

Low-calorie sweeteners

What are low-calorie sweeteners?

Low-calorie sweeteners, formerly called artificial sweeteners or sugar substitutes, have very few or no

calories and therefore won’t raise blood glucose levels. You’ll see them in sugar-free products such as soda and desserts. Some of these sweeteners can be used in cooking or baking; others are added to foods and beverages after cooking. Some manufactured products use a combination of low-calorie sweeteners to get the best flavor.

Generic name	Brand name	Website
Acesulfame K, also called acesulfame potassium	Sweet One®, Swiss Sweet®, Sunett®	www.sweetone.com
Aspartame	Equal®, NutraSweet®	www.equal.com
Saccharin	Sweet ‘N Low®, Sugar Twin®	www.sweetnlow.com
Sucralose	Splenda®	www.splenda.com

The following low-calorie sweeteners have been approved for use in the United States. Their brand names and websites for recipes and additional information are also listed:

Are low-calorie sweeteners safe?

The low-calorie sweeteners in use in the United States all underwent extensive testing before they were approved. Results showed that low-calorie sweeteners are safe for everyone, including children and pregnant women. However, people with a rare condition called phenylketonuria (PKU) should limit their intake of aspartame, one type of low-calorie sweetener.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of reduced-calorie or low-calorie sweeteners?

Foods with low- or reduced-calorie sweeteners can have fewer calories than foods made with sugar and other caloric sweeteners. That can help if you’re trying to cut calories. However, some sugar-free foods or products that use low-calorie sweeteners actually have more calories and may have more fat than the sugar-sweetened versions.

Real-Life Stories from People with Diabetes

I just retired and my wife had a big party for me. First there was dinner, with all my favorites: steak, baked potato, corn on the cob, fresh rolls and butter—and of course I knew there’d be a big cake. So instead of having a potato, some corn, and two of those rolls, I skipped the rolls. I traded some dinner carbs for some cake carbs. Even with all the celebrating, my blood glucose was still on target that night! When I first got diabetes 50 years ago, I was taught a bunch of “don’ts”—don’t do this, don’t do that. It’s sure different now!

John T., age 65 • type 1 diabetes

When you're considering foods with low- or reduced-calorie sweeteners, always check the Nutrition Facts on the label. By comparing the calories in the sugar-free version to the regular version, you'll see whether you're really getting fewer calories. You'll also want to compare the fat content of the labels. Some people choose the regular version of a food and cut back on the serving size instead of buying the sugar-free version. Consider price as well—sometimes sugar-free versions cost more.

Low calorie sweeteners are also useful for adding extra flavor or sweetness to your food with few if any extra calories. You can experiment with your own recipes to include low-calorie sweeteners.

Compare the carbohydrate and calories of the regular and the low-calorie cranberry juice cocktail. Which would be a better choice for you?

Cranberry Juice Cocktail, Regular	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1 cup (8 fl. oz.) (240.0g)	
Servings per container: 8	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 130	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 0.0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 35mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 32.0g	11%
Dietary Fiber 0.3g	1%
Sugars 32.0g	
Protein 0.0g	

Cranberry Juice Cocktail, Low-Calorie	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1 cup (8 fl. oz.) (240.0g)	
Servings per container: 8	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 40	Calories from Fat 0
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 0.0g	0%
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 75mg	2%
Total Carbohydrate 10.0g	3%
Dietary Fiber 0.0g	0%
Sugars 10.0g	
Protein 0.0g	

Compare the labels of regular and sugar-free pound cake. Which would be a better choice for you?

Old Fashioned Pound Cake	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1/6 loaf	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 210	Calories from Fat 81
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 9.0g	14%
Saturated Fat 2.0g	10%
Total Carbohydrate 28.0g	9%
Dietary Fiber 0.0g	0%
Sugars 17.0g	

Sugar-Free Golden Pound Cake	
Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size: 1/6 loaf	
Amount per Serving	
Calories 256	Calories from Fat 117
% Daily Value	
Total Fat 13.0g	20%
Saturated Fat 2.0g	10%
Total Carbohydrate 37.0g	12%
Dietary Fiber 1.0g	less than 1%
Sugars 0.0g	
Sugar Alcohols 19.0g	

Real-Life Stories from People with Diabetes

I've always had a sweet tooth—anybody who knows me can tell you that. In fact, I'm famous for my homemade chocolate chip cookies. When they told me I had diabetes, I thought I'd never be able to eat sweets again. So I was glad to find out from my dietitian that there are lots of ways I can still eat sweets without making my blood glucose go sky-high. I've experimented with my cookie recipe and cut back on the sugar and fat.

Doris M., age 71 • type 2 diabetes

Ask the Diabetes Advisor

Question: When my doctor said I had diabetes, the first thing I thought of was food! Would I have to give up flan? It's our family's favorite dessert. I make it for all the holidays and birthday dinners. How can I still have my favorite sweets?

Anna R., age 48 • type 2 diabetes

Answer: There are ways you can still have your favorite desserts and keep your blood glucose on target. Family favorites like flan, cookies, and sweet potato pie can fit into your meal plan as a substitute for other carbohydrates like rice or pasta at the same meal.

For More Information

To get more information about diabetes, contact the American Diabetes Association:

- Call 1-800-DIABETES (342-2383). For more information on exchanges and carbohydrate counting, ask for copies of *Exchange Lists for Meal Planning* and *Basic Carbohydrate Counting*.
- Go to www.diabetes.org.

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1-800-DIABETES (342-2383)
www.diabetes.org

*Answer to the question on page 2: Two cookies have 34 grams of carb.