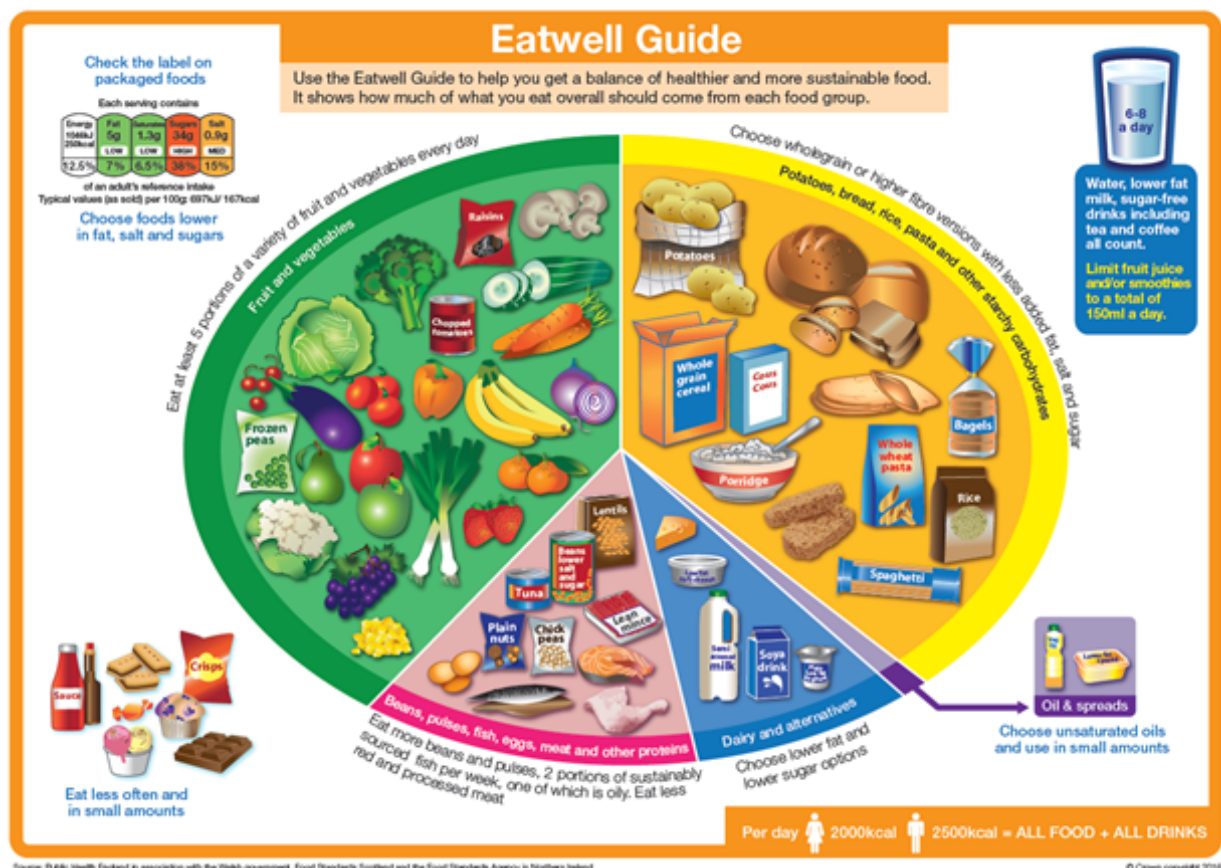


## Food and Diabetes

### Healthy Eating

There is no special diet for someone with diabetes. It should be a healthy and balanced diet that everyone can enjoy. The dietary recommendations for young people with diabetes are the same as that for the general population and should be based around the Eatwell Guide. The important difference is ensuring your meals and snack routine fits in well with your insulin regimen.

The Eatwell Guide (illustrated below) splits our food in to 5 different groups. Try to have a variety of foods from the yellow, green, pink and blue sections in the proportions shows, over the course of a week. Foods shown in the purple section should be eaten in small amounts. For under 5s the advice is slightly different. Speak to your dietitian for more information.



**Vegetables and fruit** (Green section) e.g. carrots, cucumber, strawberries, peas, tomatoes  
Aim for 5 portions of vegetables and fruit per day. These are rich in vitamins and fibre and can make a healthy snack. One 150ml glass of juice counts as a portion, but this can be very quickly absorbed in the blood stream, so with diabetes it is better to have a piece of fruit

instead or keep to a small glass and have it with a meal where it will be absorbed more slowly.

**Starchy Foods** (Yellow section) e.g. bread, pasta, rice, potatoes, cereals

These are also known as carbohydrates. Your body breaks these foods down into glucose which is a source of energy. They are also important sources of vitamins, minerals and fibre. It is recommended to include these at each meal. Although they increase blood glucose levels it is important to include these as part of your diet as they are needed for growth and energy.

**Protein foods** (Pink section): e.g. fish, nuts, red meat, poultry, eggs, beans, pulses

Protein is important for growth and repair and is also a good source of iron and zinc.

Include 1-2 portions of protein foods per day. If you are a vegetarian, increase this to 2-3 times per day.

**Dairy foods** (Blue section): e.g. milk, cheese, yoghurt

These foods are great sources of calcium which is important for healthy teeth and bones. Aim for 3 servings of dairy foods per day. It can be beneficial to choose lower fat versions as these contain less saturated fat which contributes to heart disease. Full fat versions should be given to under 5s.

**Foods high in fat** (Purple section): e.g. butter, oils

These foods should be taken in small amounts. Choose unsaturated versions e.g. rapeseed oil, olive oil and olive oil based spreads as these are better for heart health.

**Sugary carbohydrates** e.g. cakes, biscuits, sweets, chocolate, ice cream

These foods are high in fat and sugar and should be eaten as a treat rather than every day. Try to make healthier choices by choosing a yoghurt or piece of fruit as a snack or dessert rather than cake or ice cream.

**Soft Drinks**

Fizzy drinks and fruit juices (including smoothies) are absorbed quickly into the bloodstream causing a rapid increase in blood glucose levels, which can be difficult to control. Sweet drinks are also bad for your teeth. Reduced sugar drinks are not sugar free and will affect your blood glucose levels so try to avoid these. Choose sugar free or diet drinks which contain very little or no carbohydrate, but be aware that these are still bad for your teeth.

**Snacks**

Try to keep snacks healthy where possible. Some healthy ideas include a piece of fruit, vegetable sticks with hummus, rice cakes, oat cakes. Try to avoid sending unhealthy foods into schools and using biscuits for the follow up snack after you have experienced hypoglycaemia. The general rule is that 10g of carbohydrate can be eaten between meals without taking insulin. Anything more than this should be covered with insulin, however this amount can be different for different people.

**Sweeteners**

With diabetes, you do not need to avoid sugar completely. A small amount of sugar is fine, however artificial sweeteners can be useful as they do not affect blood glucose levels. Examples include aspartame, saccharin, sucralose and Stevia. These are intensely sweet so should be used in very small amounts. There are acceptable daily intake levels set, but these are difficult to exceed.

**Diabetic products**

These should be avoided as are often expensive, unpalatable and contain sweeteners which, if eaten in large quantities can have a laxative effect. If you would like a treat, it is preferable to choose the original food and have it with a meal. Lower sugar products can be useful such as reduced sugar jams and fruit canned in natural juice rather than syrup.