

Dr David Cavan: low carbohydrate food recommendations

The focus of this advice is to reduce your intake of foods which convert to glucose in your body and to include more foods which have little impact on blood glucose levels.

SUGAR: All sugars (white sugar, brown sugar, honey, molasses, etc.) are directly converted to glucose in your bloodstream. They should ALL be avoided as they will all cause spikes in your blood glucose levels.

STARCHES: White refined carbohydrates such as bread, rolls, rice, pasta, and potatoes should be reduced or avoided where possible. Wholegrain or healthier options may be included **in limited portions**. Healthier options include oats, sweet potato, quinoa, brown rice, and breads with wholegrains or seeds.

FRUITS: All fruits contain fructose, and some fruits have less of an effect on blood glucose levels than others. Best choices include small apples or pears, and all berries; blueberries, raspberries, strawberries.

VEGETABLES: The emphasis here is MORE is better! All green leafy vegetables and salad vegetables are good choices. Include a minimum of two portions of vegetables with meals but more can be incorporated to replace starches on your plate. Try fresh cooked cauliflower, broccoli, courgette, aubergine, cabbage and green beans in place of large portions of pasta, potato or rice. Add flavour, taste and texture to meats with tomato, mushrooms, peppers and onions. These all have very little carbohydrate and are good sources of plant fibre.

PROTEIN: Good quality protein sources should be included daily. All meats, chicken, fish - particularly oily fish such as salmon, tuna, and sardines - can be eaten freely. Eggs are excellent sources of high quality protein. Highly processed meats such as burgers, corned beef and hot dogs should be avoided. For vegetarians, beans and lentils are a good source of protein. Some, such as chick peas, are high in carbohydrate. Better options are red beans, kidney beans and black beans.

DAIRY: Milk and dairy products are another good source of protein, and there is no need to switch to soy or dairy free milks unless you are lactose intolerant. Full fat plain Greek yogurt makes an excellent high protein choice for breakfast or to replace dessert. Try plain Greek yogurt with berries and chopped walnuts or almonds for a filling breakfast or light meal. Cheese can also be used in moderation.

FATS: Choose healthy sources of fat. Olive oil, canola oil, and coconut oil can be used. You can use small amounts of butter instead of margarine. Avocados and nuts, particularly almonds and walnuts, are also good sources of healthy fats.

DESSERTS: Desserts are usually high in sugar and can increase cravings for more sweet foods. If you have a sweet tooth the recommended approach is to avoid having desserts, cakes and biscuits at home. Combine berries with plain Greek yoghurt or double cream or use some of the recipes in the *Low Carb Diabetes Cookbook* for sweet treats.

BEVERAGES: ALL SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGES INCLUDING FRUIT JUICE SHOULD BE AVOIDED COMPLETELY. Challenge yourself to drink water only, sparkling water or water infused with lemon or lime slices.

ALCOHOL: Alcoholic beverages are full of empty calories. Beer and mixed drinks contain carbohydrate and will interfere with losing weight. Wine is a good option.

The following table provides some examples for each meal of the day.

| | CHOOSE THESE... | INSTEAD OF THESE... |
|--------------|---|--|
| Breakfast | Eggs, mushrooms, tomatoes Cold cuts, fish plain yoghurt (with berries, seeds, nuts) | Cereals Sweetened yoghurt Toast, jam |
| Lunch | Soup (minimise root vegetables) Salad | Sandwiches Crisps |
| Evening meal | Meat, fish, chicken or pulses with lots of green vegetables Starch – none or small amount only | Rice, potato or pasta-based meals |
| Snacks | A small piece of fruit Handful of nuts, olives. Hard-boiled egg Small piece of cheese or dark chocolate | Biscuits, cakes Banana, dried fruit, Chocolate bars |
| Drinks | Tea, coffee (no sugar, black or small amount of milk only) Red or dry white wine, spirits Sugar-free mixers | Cappuccino Sugar-sweetened beverages Fruit juice and smoothies Sweet wines, cider, liqueurs |

If you have diabetes, checking your blood glucose before and two hours after a meal is a good way of assessing the effect of what you eat on your glucose levels. Aim to do this at least once a day.

Important: if you take insulin, sulfonylurea tablets (for example gliclazide, glibenclamide, glyburide or glipizide) or meglitinide tablets (repaglinide, nateglinide or mitiglinide), then you will need to reduce the dose as you reduce your carbohydrate intake. Please seek advice from your doctor or diabetes nurse.

Adapted from 'Reverse your diabetes: the step by step plan to take control of type 2 diabetes' and 'Take control of type 1 diabetes' by Dr David Cavan