



**Practical tips
& advice**

Meal times for individuals with Diabetes



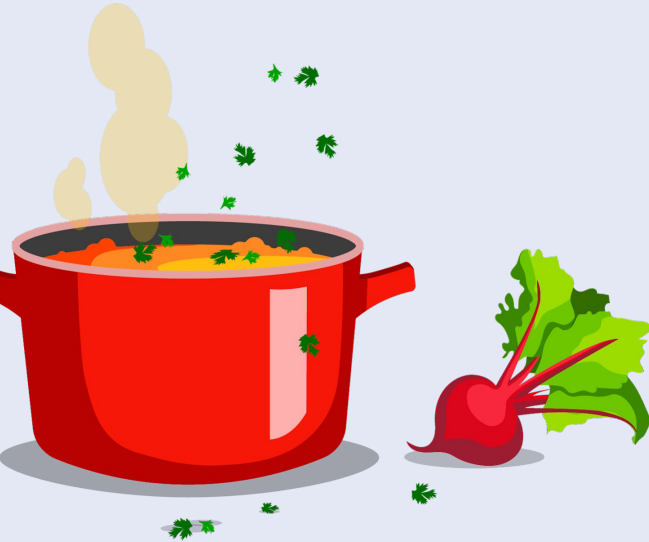
- Individuals with diabetes are recommended to have **regular meal times** every day.
- For persons on regular insulin treatment and certain oral diabetic medications (i.e., sulfonylureas such as glipizide, gliclazide, glimepiride, tolbutamide), **it is especially important not to skip or delay meals.** This is to prevent the risk of hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar level).
- **You should consult your doctor if you are planning to fast or change your meal times for a prolonged period of time** (e.g., religious reasons such as Ramadan), as your diabetic medication may have to be adjusted accordingly.

Meal times



- If your schedule does not allow you to take regular meals, do **discuss with your healthcare team on a diabetic medication regimen that is more suited for your lifestyle.**
- **If you are planning to substantially reduce the amount of carbohydrates in your meals, you may be at risk of hypoglycaemia if you are on insulin or certain oral medications** (sulfonylureas such as glipizide, gliclazide, glimepiride, tolbutamide). Do discuss with your doctor on how your medication can be adjusted to match any change in your diet.

Healthier cooking



You can whip up delicious and healthy meals even if you have diabetes. Some tips on how you can do this:

- **Use healthier cooking methods (e.g., steaming, baking, boiling, grilling).**
- **Use healthier ingredients**
 - ↳ Choose wholegrains instead of refined grains. For example, replace white rice with brown rice
 - ↳ Choose lean meat and remove all visible fat before cooking
 - ↳ Reduce salt, instead use natural seasoning (e.g., herbs and spices)
Use condiments and sauces in moderation
- **Plan meals that incorporate vegetables as the main dish (together with fruits, they should make up 50% of your plate), rather than meat or carbohydrates as part of a balanced diet.**

Healthy recipes you can [try](#).

How can I cook healthy and yummy meals?



Stir fry



Boil or steam



Grill or bake



Reduce salt, instead use natural seasonings e.g., herbs and spices



Choose healthier cooking oil (e.g., sunflower, olive or canola)



Remove all visible fat before cooking

Healthier Cooking – Local Cuisine

Chinese



- Steam dumplings instead of frying
- Switch to brown rice
- Control the amount of sodium (e.g., salt and soy sauce)
- Use herbs and spices

Malay



- Choose Ikan Bakar or Ayam Panggang
- Use low-fat or skimmed milk in curries and gravies, instead of coconut milk
- Cook meat together with gravy instead of stir-frying separately
- Use leaner cuts of meat

Indian



- Use healthier oil options
- Grill, boil, steam & bake where possible
- Use low-fat plain yoghurt as a substitute

Eating out

It can be challenging to eat healthy when eating out with the wide variety of food and drink options available in Singapore.

Some tips on how you can make healthier food choices when eating out:

- **Plan ahead** – look out for food outlets that are part of the Healthier Dining Programme. These outlets have healthier dishes which are lower in calories, prepared with wholegrains or healthier oil, or lower in sugar. Ordering food when you are very hungry can cause you to order more than you intended to, and overeat. Look at the menu before arriving to better plan your meal.
- **Read the menu with care** – look for menu wordings to check how food is prepared. For example, foods that are described as 'steamed', 'boiled', 'baked' or 'poached' are healthier than foods that are 'fried in oil'. Avoid foods that are also 'rich' and 'creamy' which tend to be high in fat.
- **Eat just enough** – it is okay to not eat everything on your plate. Aim to eat until you are 80% full. To prevent food wastage, request to take away any remaining food to eat later. Do not leave cooked food standing at room temperature for more than 2 hours. Reheat stored cooked food at temperatures above 75°C and make sure it is served piping hot.



Healthier Dining Programme



Lower in calories



No added sugar



Lower in sugar



Higher in wholegrains



We use healthier oil

Eat all foods in moderation.



Wholegrain options

Eat all foods in moderation.

Choose healthier options when eating out



For main meals:

- Select **a variety of items** to make up a balanced meal – include one or two vegetable side dishes, and one or two protein-rich items such as tofu, fish, or lean meat
- Select foods that are prepared with healthier cooking methods (e.g., steamed, baked) rather than fried foods
- Rice, bread or pasta – choose wholegrain options (e.g., brown rice, multigrain bread)
- Choose fresh salads with **non-cream based** dressings

For drinks:

- Request for **water**
- Ask for **less ("siew dai") or no added sugar ("kosong")** options
- Choose drinks with reduced sugar or no sugar (e.g., drinks with Healthier Choice Symbol or Nutri-Grade mark A or B)

For desserts:

- Choose **fresh fruits** over fruit juice
- Share desserts to control your intake

Healthier options at hawker centres



Sliced Fish Soup*



Yong Tau Foo*



Grilled Chicken Chop



Bee Hoon Soto



Chapati

*Omit soup to reduce your salt intake

Healthier options with economy rice



Choose this

- Brown rice
- Steamed, stewed, braised or stir-fried dishes

Instead of this

- White, flavoured or fried rice
- Deep-fried dishes

You can also:

- Order more non-starchy vegetables dishes (e.g., kailan, broccoli, eggplant)
- Limit the amount of gravy and sauce

Tips for eating at a buffet

- **Don't skip your meals before going for the buffet.** Going to a buffet on an empty stomach will cause you to eat more than needed. You can eat a small snack before heading out.
- **Check which options are available before you pick up the plate.** Choose healthier options and try new food in smaller portions. This will help you make the best choices for yourself.
- **Enjoy your meal slowly and don't rush through it just so that you can eat more.** Consuming more food doesn't necessarily mean a better dining experience!



Eating during festive occasions and social gatherings

Food is often an integral **part of social experiences**, such as going to a buffet for celebrations, or catching up with friends over a meal in a restaurant. However, these situations may encourage overconsumption, especially of less nutritious food.

Some tips on how to eat healthy during social occasions:

- **Having a bottle of water on hand** helps you stay hydrated and you will have a readily available alternative to sugary drinks.
- If a meal portion served is too much or if there are leftovers, **don't be afraid to ask to take it away to consume at a later time.**
- **Avoid alcohol** as it provides empty calories, i.e., provides energy with limited nutritional value. If you do drink, **limit your intake and don't consume alcohol on an empty stomach** as it can cause hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) if consumed excessively.



How can I continue with healthy eating during festivals and celebrations?



Plan meals ahead



Eat All Foods in Moderation

Opt for healthier products



Use healthier cooking methods



Eat in **moderation**



Avoid alcohol as much as possible



Maintain **medication schedule** and **insulin** dosage

Peer pressure at social gatherings. How do I handle it?



Peer pressure during social situations is common, and it's okay **to communicate your boundaries** when you feel pressured to eat something you don't want to.

Have some phrases in mind to help practise them politely when a situation calls for it!

How can I fast safely (for religious reasons)?

Before fasting



Consult your doctor
if it is safe for you to fast



Adjust your diet with your
healthcare professional



**Adjust your medication or insulin
dose** with your doctor

During fasting



Self-monitor blood sugar levels
regularly and **check for
symptoms of hypoglycaemia**
(low blood sugar)



If your blood sugar level is low
(< 4 mmol/L), **stop your fast**
and take a sweetened drink



If symptoms of low or high blood
sugar persist, **stop your fast
and seek medical attention**

When should I not fast?

When you are or have any of the following



Frequent hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) or **poorly controlled diabetes**



Serious conditions such as nerve disorders, heart problems or uncontrolled hypertension



Pregnant or **breastfeeding**



Sick



Not been following your prescribed medication, diet and physical activities