



DIABETES AND FOOD CHOICES IN THE LATINO COMMUNITY

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Diabetes is considered an urgent problem in the Latino community. Did you know that the rates of diabetes for Latinos are almost double those of non-Latino whites?¹ More than 10% of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States have been diagnosed with diabetes.²

Staying Healthy

You don't have to give up foods you love to stay healthy and eat right when you have type 2 diabetes. Choosing the right foods in the right amounts can help you improve your overall health.³ Remember that you may have to play an important role, along with your healthcare team, to make sure you eat right to stay healthy.⁴ The best way to make these healthy choices is to understand how the food you eat can impact your overall health and your blood sugar.

What Is Type 2 Diabetes?

When you have type 2 diabetes, your body has a problem using the food you eat for energy.⁵ After you eat, your body works to break down the carbohydrates (sugars and starches) found in the foods into glucose, a form of sugar. This sugar moves into your bloodstream.⁵ Insulin, a hormone secreted by an organ called the pancreas, helps your body take this sugar and use it for energy.^{5,6}



BLOOD SUGAR AND A HEALTHY BALANCE

When you have type 2 diabetes, your pancreas isn't producing enough insulin to meet your body's needs, or your body is having trouble using the insulin it does make.⁵

This means that your body has a harder time keeping your blood sugar (glucose) in a healthy balance.⁷ When your blood sugar is too high for too long, it can potentially hurt your body and increase your risk for many serious health problems.⁸

Things that can make your blood sugar rise⁹:

- A meal or snack with more food or more carbohydrates (sugars and starches) than usual
- Not staying active
- Being sick or stressed

Things that can make blood glucose fall⁹:

- A meal or snack with less food or fewer carbohydrates (sugars and starches) than usual
- More activity than normal
- Missing a meal or snack
- Drinking alcoholic beverages (especially on an empty stomach)

Certain medications can also affect your blood sugar levels.⁹ Let your healthcare team know of any medications you may be taking.




Eating Right With Type 2 Diabetes

Many Latino dishes feature staple foods that are high in carbohydrates. Your healthcare team may advise you to cut back as carbohydrates may impact your blood sugar.¹⁰ Often the most popular comfort foods are high in carbohydrates and fat.^{11,12}

It may seem overwhelming at first, but making healthy food choices and eating well-balanced meals in the correct amounts can help you maintain your blood sugar at a healthy level.¹³ Remember, you don't have to give up foods you love to eat right when you have type 2 diabetes.

TIPS FOR HEALTHIER LATINO CUISINE

While fad diets come and go, there are a few basic tips on good nutrition that are important to remember. Try these tips when planning your meals¹⁴:

- For protein sources, look for fresh seafood, lean poultry, and beans. Consider foods such as ceviche, a veggie black bean wrap, baked empanadas, or chicken fajitas/tortas.¹²
 - When preparing traditional dishes that have ground meat in the recipe, choose 93% lean ground turkey or ground sirloin beef when possible.¹²
 - If you eat salsa, choose fresh salsa over store-bought. While the store brand may be low in calories, it usually has a high amount of salt.¹²
 - Be conscious of your portions.¹²
 - Choose brown rice over white. As a whole grain, brown rice has more nutrients.¹²
 - Try to keep the fat you use when cooking to a minimum and avoid unhealthy fats like lard and butter. A little vegetable or olive oil or cooking spray are better options.¹²
 - Use healthy cooking methods like grilling, baking, steaming, or broiling to prepare your food.¹²
 - Choose dried beans when you can. They generally have less sodium than canned.¹²
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- If you eat refried beans, look for the fat-free options at the supermarket. You can also make your own by blending whole black or pinto beans in the food processor with your own spices.¹²
 - Be aware of your cheese portions. Cheese can be high in saturated fat and sodium. Look for reduced-fat cheeses when shopping.¹²
 - In dishes that call for sour cream, consider using nonfat Greek yogurt or nonfat plain yogurt instead. They have less calories and fat than sour cream but with a similar taste and texture.¹²

USING THE PLATE METHOD¹⁵

A useful strategy for meal planning is known as the plate method. It's a simple and easy way to look at your meals to both help manage your type 2 diabetes and to lose weight by watching your portions.

To create your plate, simply draw an imaginary line down the center of your plate and then another line cutting across one of the halves. Next, select the foods you want to eat by following the guidelines shown below:

Nonstarchy Vegetables^{12,15}

Examples: Greens with cooked peppers, onions, and salsa

Lean Protein Sources^{12,15}

Examples: Chicken or turkey without the skin, fish or seafood, lean cuts of beef and pork, low-fat cheese

Carbohydrates/ Starchy Foods^{12,15}

Examples: Beans, brown rice, corn



Add a serving of fruit and a glass of water, low-fat milk, or a low-calorie drink to complete your meal.¹⁵

Making Better Food Choices for a Healthier You

A well-balanced meal plan can help you stay in the best health.¹³ Talk to your healthcare team about how you can make healthy food choices. They can provide you with more information on the plate method and other meal-planning methods that can help you eat right.³

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CarePath Healthy Engagements is a comprehensive program designed to help improve the lives of people living with type 2 diabetes and assist those that care for them. CarePathHealthyEngagements.com

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