

Tools for Life – Weekly Health & Safety Meeting



Home Healthy - Home Safe

November 2021

Prevent Diabetes through Nutrition

People who have diabetes have too much sugar in their blood. Most cases of Type II diabetes are caused by our lifestyles; primarily what we eat. Making the right food choices can reduce our blood sugar levels and reduce our risk of developing Type II diabetes. So what should you eat? Eating well means eating meals that include healthy carbohydrates, proteins and fat. Here are some general guidelines from the Cleveland Clinic.

Carbohydrates are essential to provide our cells with energy. Our body breaks down carbs into sugar glucose. Then insulin helps deliver that glucose to our cells where it is converted into energy. There are good carbs and bad carbs. Good carbohydrates can be found in beans, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and grains. Good carbs contain phytonutrients and fibers that help our bodies manage the absorption of sugar. Bad carbs are highly processed foods found in the interior aisles at the grocery store. Make your body operate like a high performance engine by filling at least half your plate with a variety of high octane fruits and veggies. Try to eat fresh fruit rather than canned, juiced or dried. Include a variety of vegetables that are fresh, frozen or canned. Make your plate appealing by including lots of colors and textures. Be a food adventurer and try new vegetables.

Protein provides us with the building blocks of life. It helps us make muscle, connective tissue, blood, enzymes, and neurotransmitters. Balancing our meals with the right amount of protein improves our blood sugar response. The Cleveland Clinic says we can get a portion of our daily protein from plants, but as we get older we need more protein and it's easier to get adequate amounts from animal protein. Veal, beef, pork, chicken, tuna, sardines, cheese, salmon, crickets, and eggs are good sources of animal protein. Plant sources of protein can be found in peanut butter, almonds, oats, tofu, lentils, and black beans among many others. Aim to fill 25% of your plate with protein or 20% of your calories.

Healthy fats can lower blood sugar levels and improve our insulin response. Good fats are unsaturated fats. These are found in foods like nuts, fish, olive oil, canola oil, and seeds. Try to make these the main source of your fats. Saturated fats like butter, lard, and full fat dairy are less healthy and should be consumed with respect. By that I mean enjoy them when you eat them. Trans fats are the worst and are found in processed foods like crackers, snack foods and fast foods. They can be identified on food labels by the words "partially hydrogenated". Reduce or eliminate consumption of these highly processed foods and saturated fats as much as possible.

November is Diabetes Prevention Month. Early signs of diabetes include: frequent urination, increased thirst, always feeling hungry, tired, blurry vision, slow healing of cuts and wounds, tingling, numbness in hands or feet, patches of dark skin, itching and yeast infections. If you experience these symptoms make an appointment to discuss them with your doctor as soon as possible. Early diagnosis and treatment can improve your health and reduce your risk of diabetic complications. Without treatment you are at increased risk of heart disease, stroke, nerve damage, foot problems, kidney disease, eye disease, and sexual dysfunction.

HEALTH REMINDER: "You don't have to shop in a gourmet food store, a health food store, a farmers market, or eat only organic to eat well. There are plenty of healthy foods right in your local supermarket and you can find them by shopping the outside aisles of the store." Dr. Mark Hyman

Discussion Points / Question:

1. Why are carbohydrates important?
2. How does protein support our blood sugar?
3. What should you do if you have symptoms of diabetes?