

# Meal Planning and Shopping for Diabetes

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Meal planning can save you time and money. Without planning you are more likely to eat expensive convenience or restaurant foods that are high in fat, sugar and sodium.

## How to Get Started

**Build menus around foods you already have.** If your favorite recipes are not very nutritious, change them to cut the fat, sodium and sugar. Try one new recipe per week. Look for simple recipes with few ingredients.

**Consider how the meals will look.** Choose foods that are different in color, texture, flavor, shape, size and temperature. A meal that is all one color or all one texture is less appetizing.

**Look for grocery store specials in the newspaper.** Buy what is in season, to save money. Use coupons only if they are for products you normally buy or that fit into your meal plan. Often coupons are for expensive national brands. A store brand or a fresh product may be a better buy.

**Make a shopping list to control impulse buying.** You will stick to your budget better and not forget items you need. If you use coupons, write your list on an envelope and put the coupons in it. Only buy things not on the list when they are truly a bargain.

**Shop only once a week when you are not hungry.** The more you go to the store, the more food you will buy. Shop alone if family members push you to buy things you do not need. Don't shop on days when free food samples are offered.

**Go to stores you know.** Group food on your shopping list according to store departments. You will shop more quickly. The longer you stay in a store the more you will buy.

**Plan meals for the whole family.** The diabetic meal plan is what everyone should eat. It is well-balanced and nutritious. Few special foods will be needed. The only extra food you may want are diet drinks, artificial sweeteners and low fat salad dressings and margarine.

## The Value of Nutrition Labels

Read labels of foods you use at home. If they do not meet your nutrition goals, look for better choices. Don't read all the labels at once. Focus on one or two foods each week. In a short time, you will have a whole new diet.

Most people read the label only for the nutrients that are important to them. If you have diabetes, total fat and total carbohydrate may be important. If you have high blood pressure, you may need to look at the sodium content. If you are trying to lose weight, calories become important.



The Daily Value (% DV) on the label tells how each food fits into the total diet. If the Daily Value is less than 5%, the food is a poor source of that nutrient. If it is 20% or more, it is an excellent source of the nutrient. For some nutrients like sodium and cholesterol, try to keep your total intake below the Daily Value. For others like calcium, get the Daily Value or more.

At first, diabetic meal planning will take time. Your dietitian can help. But with practice, it gets easier. Soon both you and your budget will be healthier.

## Food for Thought

1. Can I plan one week's menus and a shopping list? \_\_\_\_\_  
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2. What two food labels this week will I read at home so I that can make better choices at the store?
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_

Prepared by Connie Crawley, MS, RD, LD  
Extension Nutrition and Health Specialist