



Guidelines for Evaluating Diets



Healthy



A diet is healthy if it can be followed for a lifetime and includes:

- a variety of food
- all nutrients needed for health
- food you like
- enough food to feel satisfied
- food you can afford

Unhealthy



A diet may be unhealthy if it cannot be followed for a lifetime and it:

- promises a quick result
- leaves out a specific food or food group
- uses a specific food or food group
- claims a specific food has special powers
- makes claims that sound too good to be true
- lists “good” and “bad” foods
- requires purchase of a product
- is not supported by reliable scientific organizations



Diabetes and Nutrition



Willard Johnson, Sr., enjoys a low-fat, low-sugar breakfast at the Skokomish Tribe.

Common Questions, Clear Answers

The Nez Perce Indians of Idaho call the lands surrounding the Clearwater River their home. There are about 3000 registered tribal members, many of them living in the small town of Lapwai or near the city of Lewiston.

Of Northwest tribes, the Nez Perce has one of the largest prevalences of diabetes. Over 10 percent of tribal members have diabetes. Many more may have diabetes but do not know it.

Julie Keller is the nutritionist for the tribe and is often asked about what to eat and how to be active. Here are some of the most commonly asked questions from Nez Perce community members who have diabetes.

■ I'm not eating sweets, so why is my blood sugar so high?

Blood sugar comes from all the foods you eat, not just sweet foods. Breads, rice, cereal, potatoes, fruit and even vegetables are turned into blood sugar. Controlling your blood sugar begins with choosing foods that are low in fat and sugar. Most people need to eat more fruits, vegetables and grains.

■ How much juice, punch or pop can I drink?

Juice, punch and even sports drinks can cause high blood sugar, just like pop does. Some people with diabetes stop drinking pop. This is good, but not if you start drinking more juice or punch. It is best to drink water, sugar-free drinks or vegetable juices. Plain water is a great choice for a drink. Most people will benefit by drinking more water.

■ **How about milk? Can I drink a lot of milk?**

No, limiting milk is best. Some people replace sugary drinks with milk. This can keep your blood sugar levels high. If you drink milk, choose non-fat or one percent milk.

■ **Can I ever eat sweets again?**

Yes, you can eat sweets. One teaspoon of sugar can be worked into your daily meal plan. When you have diabetes, you can still enjoy your favorite foods. You just may need to eat less.

■ **My grandmother was on a “diabetic” diet and it was horrible! Do I have to eat like that?**

Times have changed! Our understanding of how to live well with diabetes has also changed. There is no specific diet that will be good for every person with diabetes. I work with each person and the foods they enjoy. I help them make small changes. Making small changes helps them feel better and get their blood sugar levels in control.

■ **I’ve heard fiber is good for people with diabetes. Is that true?**

Yes! Eating food with lots of fiber is good because it helps slow the release of sugar into the blood. That’s why eating a

whole orange, which has fiber, is better than drinking a glass of orange juice.

■ **I’m hearing a lot about high-protein diets. Are they good for a person with diabetes?**

No, diets that call for eating a large amount of protein (meats, fish, cheese, nuts) can be hard on the kidneys. People with diabetes are prone to kidney disease, so eating large amounts of protein could lead to kidney damage. Check with your doctor before trying a high-protein diet. The long-term effects of such a diet on diabetes are not well known. Your medication may need to be adjusted if you make major food changes. Be sure to tell your doctor about changes in food or activity so that he/she can help you manage your diabetes well.

■ **What about diabetes medicines and food? When should I eat if I’m taking medication?**

You need to eat at least three meals a day. Some people may need a snack in between meals. It is best not to skip meals when taking medicine to lower your blood sugar. Most diabetes medicine requires that you eat before or after taking the medicine. It is very important to follow your doctor’s instruction and take your medicine as directed. If you have questions, call your doctor.

■ **Will drinking alcohol affect my diabetes? What if I am taking diabetes medicine?**

Yes, drinking alcohol will have different effects, depending on your weight, activity level and whether or not you are taking medication. If you drink alcohol, let your doctor know. Your doctor can talk with you more about diabetes and alcohol.

■ **What about physical activity? Will that affect my blood sugar level?**

For most people, being more active will cause their blood sugar to go down. Walking is a great way to be active. It is best that you walk for 30 minutes most days of the week. You can break this down into three 10-minute walks if this works better for you. If you have been inactive for awhile, get your doctor’s advice before you start.

■ **I need someone to tell me what to eat. Can you give me some advice?**

People with diabetes can eat the foods they enjoy. I ask people to start by making small changes. Most people can start to get their blood sugar in the target range by eating less sugary foods or drinks. Water, vegetable juices, or sugar-free pop are better choices. Your tribal nutritionist can help you with other food changes.





Changes I Can Make



I am:

- Thinking about it
- Ready to start
- Doing it now
- Doing it for 6 months

My long-term goal is:

My short-term goal is: (Be specific about what, when, how and where)

I will ask (Who?) _____ for support by helping me in this way:
(Be specific about what they can do to help you)

I will check regularly to see if I reach my goal by:

When I reach my short-term goal my reward will be:

Signature

Date

