

A healthy meal plan is important for managing your blood glucose.

Gestational Diabetes Meal Planning

Gestational diabetes mellitus (GDM) is diabetes that is diagnosed during pregnancy. It occurs in people who do not clearly have diabetes when they are not pregnant. Following a meal plan that focuses on regular, balanced meals and healthy snacks helps manage GDM. Some women with GDM may need medication along with nutrition therapy to manage their blood sugar (glucose). Keeping your blood glucose near goal will help reduce risks for both mother and baby.

A healthy meal plan during pregnancy includes eating a variety of nutritious foods in moderate amounts and at regular meal times. This meal plan is high in healthy nutrients. Healthy food choices include vegetables, fruits, lean protein, low-fat dairy, legumes and whole grains.

If you have GDM, it is important to eat healthy carbohydrates to help you manage your blood glucose. High blood glucose levels can lead to problems for the mother and baby. Your physician can tell you more about the risks.

To get started, this brochure will explain what you need to know about:

- Creating a healthy meal plan
- Foods you should limit
- Food portion control
- Reading food labels

You should meet with a registered dietitian to make a meal plan that is right for you. The dietitian can guide and teach you about how you can manage your blood glucose and weight with your eating plan.

Creating a healthy meal plan for gestational diabetes mellitus

Here are some basic guidelines that will help you manage your blood glucose.

Eat 3 meals per day

- Plan to eat your meals at about the same time each day.
- Do not skip meals.
- Eat a variety of foods (fruits, vegetables, protein, whole grains and low-fat dairy products).
- Have a small snack if your meals are more than 5 hours apart.

Include healthy carbohydrates

While all foods can affect your blood glucose, carbohydrates may have the biggest impact. A meal plan with consistent amounts of carbohydrates can help improve your blood glucose. This means that you eat the same amount of carbohydrates at each meal. Examples of healthy carbohydrates are:

- Starches (whole grain bread, brown rice, whole grain pasta)
- Beans (lentils, chickpeas)
- Starchy vegetables (winter squash, potatoes, corn, peas)
- Fruit (apples, grapes, oranges)
- Low-fat dairy products (milk, plain yogurt)

Count your carbohydrates daily

You may want to use a website such as **myfitnesspal.com** to do this.

Follow your clinician's guidelines

- Gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy.
- Follow your prescribed meal plan.
- Participate in regular physical activity as advised by your clinician.
- Take medications as directed.
- Monitor your blood glucose as advised by your clinician.

Foods to limit

Avoid foods that are high in sugar such as:

- Flavored yogurt
- Ice cream
- Juice
- Dried fruit
- Syrup-packed canned fruit
- Fruit spread (jams, jellies)
- Baked goods (cookies, cake, pastry)
- Candy
- Crackers
- Sugar-sweetened cereals
- Sweetened drinks (soft drinks, sweetened drink mixes, Kool-Aid®)
- Sweeteners (sugar, honey, molasses, syrup)

Food portion control

Watch portion sizes

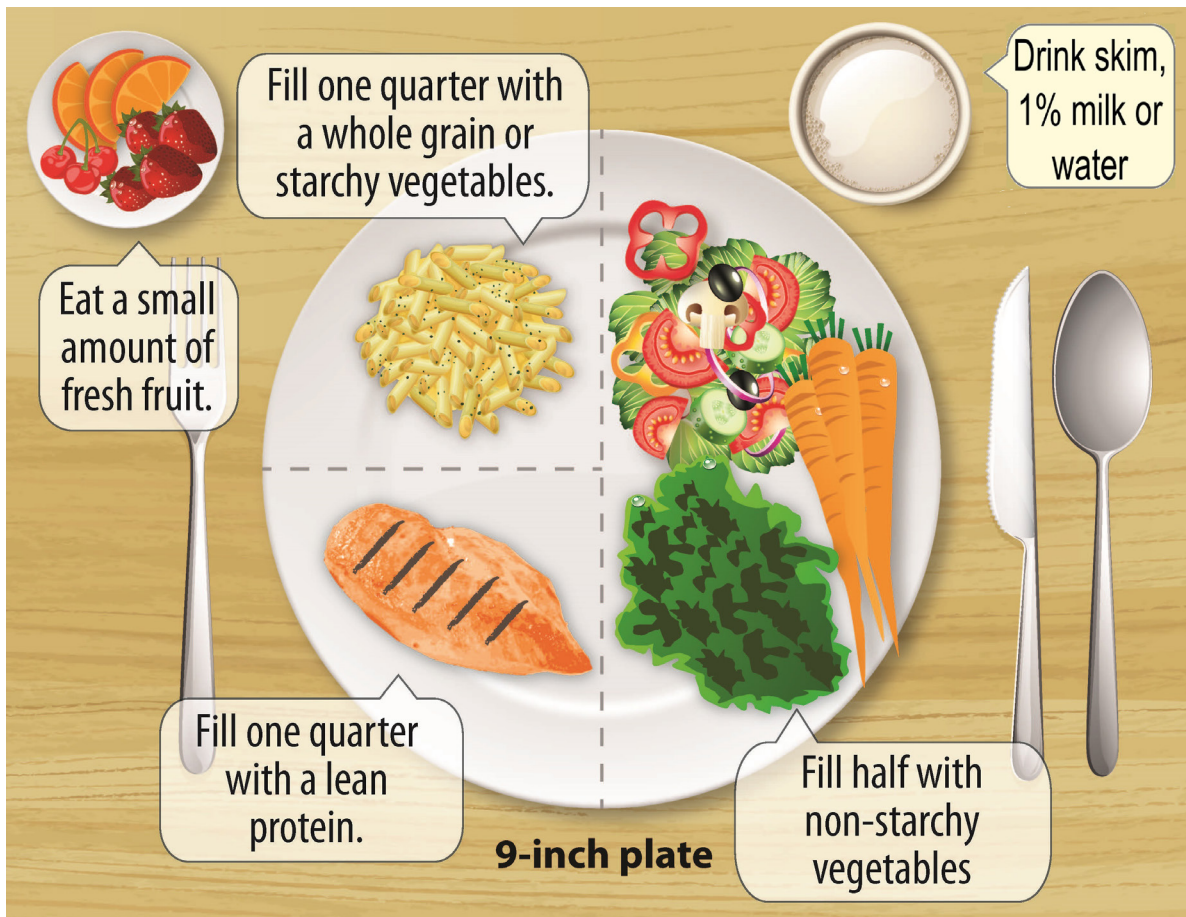
- Even healthy foods, such as large portions of fruit, will cause your blood glucose to rise if you eat too much.
- Follow the My Plate Planner at choosemyplate.gov.

Use the My Plate Planner

Create a healthy plate that will help to keep your blood glucose in goal range. Select foods from the Appendix Food Charts, and follow the plate method's 4 easy steps (Figure 1):

1. Draw a line down the middle of your plate, and fill 1/2 of your plate with non-starchy vegetables.
2. Draw another line across the middle of the other 1/2 of your plate, and fill 1/4 of your plate with a grain or starchy vegetable. Fill the final 1/4 of your plate with a lean protein.
3. Add a small piece of fruit or a serving of dairy. (This is optional.)
4. Finish your meal off with a glass of water or other zero-calorie drink.

Figure 1: My Plate Planner

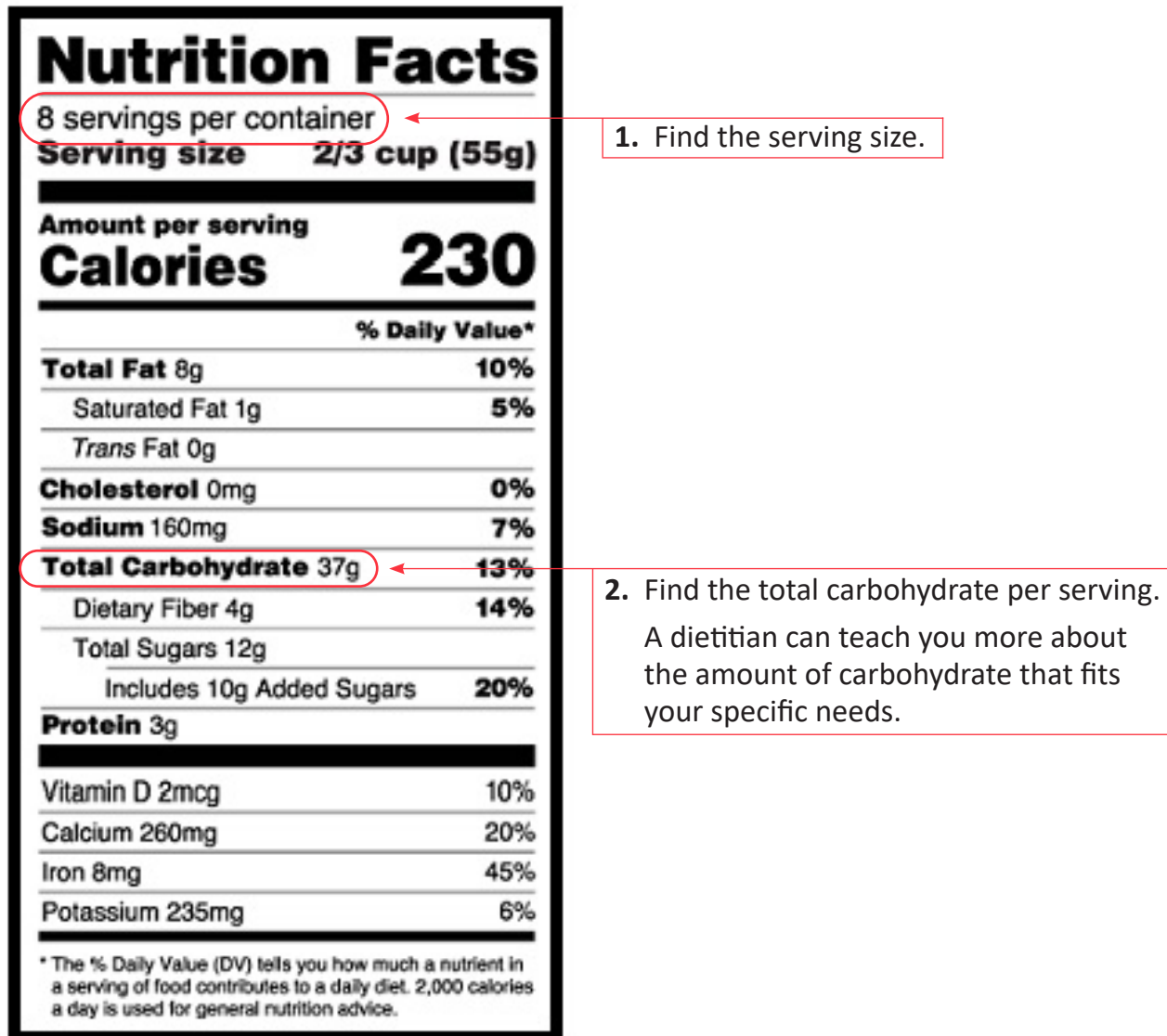


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Reading food labels

Food labels contain important information to help you manage your meal plan (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Food Nutrition Label



Learn more about the new Nutrition Facts label at [FDA.gov/NewNutritionFactsLabel](https://www.fda.gov/NewNutritionFactsLabel).

Since carbohydrates have a big impact on your blood glucose, it is important to keep track of how many carbohydrates you eat. Carbohydrates are measured in grams (g). One serving of carbohydrates is 15 grams. Your care team will talk to you about how many grams of carbohydrates per day are right for you.

A healthy menu example:

These menu examples show options for a meal plan that contains 180 grams of carbohydrates per day. They show 3 to 4 servings of carbohydrates at each meal and snack options.

Option 1

Breakfast
<p><i>45 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 egg • 1 whole grain English muffin (30 g) • 1 slice cheese or 1/4 slice avocado • 6 ounces plain yogurt (15 g)
Snack
<p><i>15 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 Wasa crackers (15 g) • 1 ounce cheese
Lunch
<p><i>45 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 slices whole grain bread (30 g) • 3 ounces chicken breast • 1 tablespoon mustard • 1 cup carrot sticks • 1 small apple (15 g)
Snack
<p><i>15 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 ounces cottage cheese • Small kiwi (15 g)
Dinner
<p><i>45 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2/3 cup quinoa (30 g) • 3 to 4 ounces baked chicken or fish • 1 cup spinach greens • 1 tablespoon dressing • 1 1/4 cup strawberries (15 g)
Snack
<p><i>15 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/3 cup hummus (15 g) • 1 cup cucumbers

Option 2

Breakfast
<p><i>30 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice of sprouted whole grain bread (15 g) • 1 tablespoon peanut butter • 6 ounces plain yogurt (15 g)
Lunch
<p><i>60 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 ounces skim milk (15 g) • 2 slices whole grain bread (30 g) • 3 ounces chicken breast • 1 tablespoon mustard • 1 cup carrot sticks • 1 small apple (15 g)
Dinner
<p><i>60 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 small sweet potato (30 g) • 1 cup of mixed greens • 1/2 cup chickpeas (15 g) • 1/2 cup cooked broccoli • 8 ounces skim milk (15 g)
Snack
<p><i>30 grams of carbohydrates:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 ounces plain yogurt (15 g) • 1 cup raspberries (15 g)

These are general guidelines. To tailor your meal plan to your specific needs, meet with an outpatient registered dietitian. To make an appointment, call one of the following:

- Northwestern Center for Lifestyle Medicine: 312.695.2300
- Center for Integrative Medicine: 312.926.DOCS (312.926.3627)
- Northwestern Medicine Primary and Specialty Care: 312-695-7970.
- TTY: 711

For more information about diabetes, call the American Diabetes Association (ADA) at 800.DIABETES (800.342.2383) or visit **diabetes.org**.

Carbohydrate Foods

Foods that increase your blood glucose

Starch <i>(1 serving = 15 grams of carbohydrates)</i>	Other Starches and Sweets <i>(1 serving = 15 grams of carbohydrates)</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 slice bread • 6-inch tortilla • 1/2 English muffin, hamburger bun or hot dog bun • 1 small pita • 1/4 bagel (1 ounce) • 1 waffle or pancake (4-inch round, 1/4 inch thick) • 3/4 cup unsweetened, dry cereal • 1/2 cup sweetened or bran cereal • 1/2 cup cooked cereal (oatmeal, grits, kashi, bulgur) • 1/3 cup cooked pasta, rice, couscous, quinoa • 4 to 6 crackers (2-inch) • 3/4 ounce (15 to 20) pretzels, snack chips • 3 cups light popcorn • 1/3 cup cooked or canned beans, lentils • 1/2 cup starchy vegetables (corn, peas, potato) • 1/2 cup cassava, dasheen, plantain • 3/4 cup winter squash (acorn, butternut, delicata, pumpkin) • 1 ounce naan, chapati, roti (about 1/3 piece) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 cup casserole or lasagna, macaroni and cheese, pasta with meat sauce • 1 cup broth-based soup • 1/2 cup cream-based soup or chili • 1 tablespoon sugar, syrup, jam, jelly, honey • 2 tablespoons light syrup • 2-inch square cake or brownie, unfrosted • 1 to 2 small cookies • 3 squares graham cracker • 1/2 cup ice cream, gelatin, frozen yogurt • 1/4 cup pudding, sherbet, sorbet • 1/2 cup sugar-free pudding • 2 tablespoons barbeque sauce • 3 tablespoons ketchup

Fruit (1 serving = 15 grams of carbohydrates)	Milk (1 serving = 15 grams of carbohydrates)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 small fresh fruit (tennis ball-sized) • 1/2 large fruit • 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce • 1/2 cup canned fruit in own juice or water • 1/2 banana (4-inch length) • 3/4 cup blueberries or blackberries • 1 1/4 cup strawberries • 1/3 cantaloupe or honeydew (1 cup cut) • 1 wedge watermelon (1-inch thick) • 17 medium grapes • 1/2 small papaya • 1/2 mango (small) • 1/2 grapefruit (large) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 cup fat-free, skim, reduced-fat milk • 1 cup unsweetened soy milk • 1 cup unsweetened oat milk • 1 cup buttermilk • 1 cup Lactaid™ milk • 1 cup kefir • 6 ounces plain yogurt

All food products are not created equal. Be sure to read the food labels of the foods you choose to get the correct serving size and nutritional information for that product.

Other Food Groups

Foods that have little effect on blood glucose:

Nonstarchy Vegetables (1 serving)	Proteins (1 serving)	Fats (1 serving)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1/2 cup cooked vegetables • 1 cup raw vegetables • 1/2 cup tomato or vegetable juice <p>Any vegetables <i>except</i> corn, peas, potatoes</p> <p>Non-starchy vegetables include onions, asparagus, green beans, broccoli, tomatoes, peppers, jicama, kale, carrots, cucumber, lettuce, spinach, cabbage, cauliflower, eggplant, celery</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ounce lean meat, fish, poultry or shellfish • 1/4 cup low-fat cottage cheese • 1 ounce low-fat cheese • 1 egg or 1/4 cup egg substitute • 1/4 cup nuts • 1 tablespoon peanut butter • 1/2 cup tofu 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 teaspoon margarine, butter, oil • 1 tablespoon reduced-fat margarine, butter, mayo, cream cheese • 2 tablespoons reduced-fat sour cream, salad dressing, half and half • 1/4 cup avocado • 1 tablespoon nuts (6 to 7 nuts) • 10 olives • 1 tablespoon sesame or sunflower seeds

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