

*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 among women who do not clearly have diabetes when they are not pregnant. GDM can be treated by following a meal plan that focuses on regular, balanced meals and healthy snacks. Some women with GDM may need medication along with nutrition therapy to control their blood sugar (glucose). Blood glucose control will help reduce risks for both mother and baby.

A healthy meal plan during pregnancy is one that 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 should include vegetables, fruits, lean protein, low-fat dairy, legumes and whole grains.

If you have gestational diabetes, it is important to eat healthy carbohydrates to help you control your blood glucose level. Uncontrolled 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 control your blood glucose level and manage your weight with your eating plan.

### Creating a healthy meal plan for gestational diabetes mellitus

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

#### ***Eat 3 meals per day.***

- Plan to eat your meals at about the same time each day.
- Do not skip meals.
- Make sure you eat a variety of foods (fruits, vegetables, protein, whole grains, dairy).
- If your meals are more than 5 hours apart, have a small snack.

### ***Enjoy 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 [www.myfitnesspal.com](http://www.myfitnesspal.com) to do this.

### ***Monitor meal plan success.***

- Monitor blood glucose as recommended by your healthcare provider.
- Your healthcare provider may ask you to test your urine for ketones 1 to 2 times per day. If so, they will show you how to do this.

### ***Follow your healthcare providers' guidelines.***

- Gain a healthy amount of weight during pregnancy.
- Follow your prescribed meal plan.
- Participate in regular physical activity as advised by your healthcare provider.
- Take medicines as directed.

## **Foods to limit**

Limit foods that are high in unhealthy fats.

Avoid foods that are high in sugar such as:

- Flavored yogurt
- Ice cream
- Juice
- Dried fruit
- Syrup-packed canned fruit
- Fruit spread (jams, jellies)
- Bakery 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.

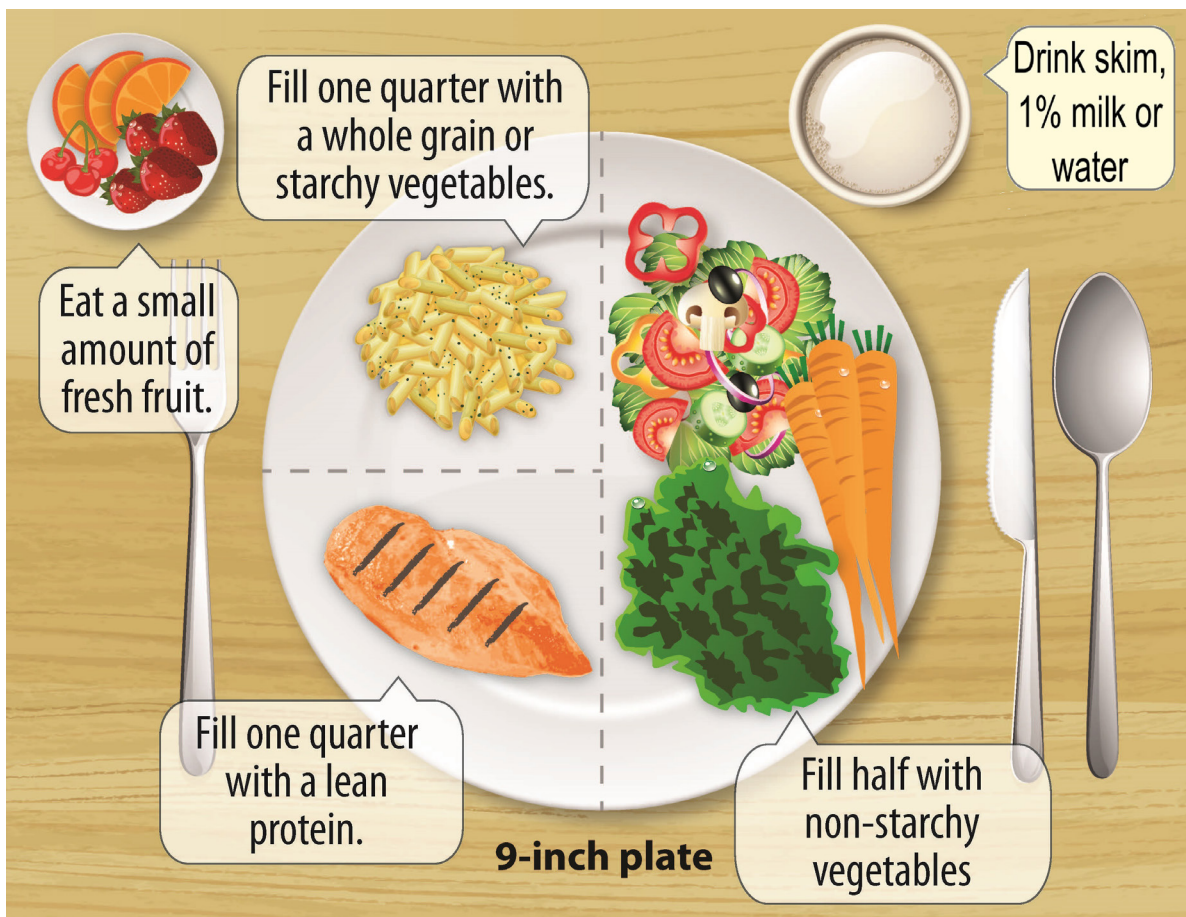
- Even healthy foods, such as large portions of fruit, will cause high blood glucose if you eat too much.
- Make sure each of your meals has the same amount of carbohydrates.
- Follow the *My Plate Planner* ([www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)).

### Use My Plate Planner.

Create a healthy plate that will help to keep your blood glucose in an acceptable 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. A small piece of fruit or a serving of dairy is optional.
4. Finish your meal off with a glass of water or other zero-calorie drink option.

**Figure 1: My Plate Planner**



## Reading food labels

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

Figure 2: Food Nutrition Label

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
Serving Size ½ cup (80 grams)			
Servings Per Container 4			
Amount Per Serving			
Calories 110		Calories from Fat 0	
% Daily Value*			
<b>Total Fat</b> 0g			0%
Saturated Fat	0g		0%
Trans Fat	0g		0%
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0g		0%
<b>Sodium</b>	115mg		5%
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 20g			7%
Dietary Fiber	4g		16%
Sugars	0g		0%
<b>Protein</b>	7g		
Vitamin A	0%	Vitamin C	2%
Calcium	4%	Iron	10%
*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat	9	Carbohydrate	4
		Protein	4

1. Find the serving size.

2. Find the total carbohydrate per serving.

- A dietitian can teach you more about the amount of carbohydrate that fits your specific needs.

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 g of carbohydrates (CHO) per day. They show 3 to 4 servings of CHO at each meal and snack options.

### Option 1

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

### Option 2

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

These are general guidelines. To tailor your meal plan to your specific needs, arrange to meet with an outpatient registered dietitian by calling the Northwestern Center for Lifestyle Medicine at 312.695.2300, the Center for Integrative Medicine at 312.926.DOCS (3627), or Northwestern Medicine Primary and Specialty Care at 312.926.6000. They can assist you with making an appointment for a personalized consultation.

For more information about diabetes, call the American Diabetes Association (ADA) 800.DIABETES (800.342.2383) or visit [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org).

### **Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources**

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

Developed by: NMH Clinical Nutrition, Center for Integrative Medicine with Medicine Nursing

## Carbohydrate Foods

Foods that increase your blood glucose

<b>Starch</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)	<b>Other Starches and Sweets</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 slice bread</li> <li>• 6-inch tortilla</li> <li>• 1/2 English muffin, hamburger bun or hot dog bun</li> <li>• 1 small pita</li> <li>• 1/4 bagel (1 ounce)</li> <li>• 1 waffle or pancake (4-inch round, 1/4 inch thick)</li> <li>• 3/4 cup unsweetened, dry cereal</li> <li>• 1/2 cup sweetened or bran cereal</li> <li>• 1/2 cup cooked cereal (oatmeal, grits, kashi, bulgur)</li> <li>• 1/3 cup cooked pasta, rice, couscous, quinoa</li> <li>• 4 to 6 crackers (2-inch)</li> <li>• 3/4 ounce (15 to 20) pretzels, snack chips</li> <li>• 3 cups light popcorn</li> <li>• 3 Tbsp dry flour</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1/2 cup casserole or lasagna, macaroni and cheese, pasta with meat sauce</li> <li>• 1 cup broth-based soup</li> <li>• 1/2 cup cream-based soup or chili</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp sugar, syrup, jam, jelly, honey</li> <li>• 2 Tbsp light syrup</li> <li>• 2-inch square cake or brownie, unfrosted</li> <li>• 1 to 2 small cookies</li> <li>• 3 squares graham cracker</li> <li>• 1/2 cup ice cream, gelatin, frozen yogurt</li> <li>• 1/4 cup pudding, sherbet, sorbet</li> <li>• 1/2 cup sugar-free pudding</li> </ul>
<b>Fruit</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)	<b>Milk</b> (1 serving = 15 g of CHO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 small fresh fruit (tennis ball-sized)</li> <li>• 1/2 large fruit</li> <li>• 1/2 cup unsweetened applesauce</li> <li>• 1/2 cup canned fruit in own juice or water</li> <li>• 1/2 banana (4-inch length)</li> <li>• 3/4 cup blueberries or blackberries</li> <li>• 1 1/4 cup strawberries</li> <li>• 1/3 cantaloupe or honeydew (1 cup cut)</li> <li>• 1 wedge watermelon (1-inch thick)</li> <li>• 17 medium grapes</li> <li>• 1/2 small papaya</li> <li>• 1/2 grapefruit (large)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 cup fat-free, skim, reduced-fat milk</li> <li>• 1 cup unsweetened soy milk</li> <li>• 1 cup buttermilk</li> <li>• 1 cup Lactaid™ milk</li> <li>• 1 cup kefir</li> <li>• 6 ounces plain yogurt</li> </ul>

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"> <li>• 1/2 cup cooked vegetables</li> <li>• 1 cup raw vegetables</li> <li>• 1/2 cup tomato or vegetable juice</li> </ul> <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"> <li>• 1 ounce lean meat, fish, poultry or shellfish</li> <li>• 1/4 cup low-fat cottage cheese</li> <li>• 1 ounce low-fat cheese</li> <li>• 1 egg or 1/4 cup egg substitute</li> <li>• 1/4 cup nuts</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp peanut butter</li> <li>• 1/2 cup tofu</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 tsp margarine, butter, oil</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp reduced-fat margarine, butter, mayo, cream cheese</li> <li>• 2 Tbsp reduced-fat sour cream, salad dressing, half and half</li> <li>• 1/4 cup avocado</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp nuts (6 to 7 nuts)</li> <li>• 10 olives</li> <li>• 1 Tbsp sesame or sunflower seeds</li> </ul>

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