



Sweet
Success.

California Diabetes and Pregnancy Program

Dietary Recommendations

If you haven't seen a Sweet Success provider yet, the information below may be helpful while you wait for your first visit. This is general information and it does not take the place of medical advice from a doctor, nurse, dietitian, or behavioral medicine specialist.



Blood sugar control during pregnancy is important for both your health and the health of your baby. It is important to eat a balanced diet and to include foods from all of the food groups.

Foods that contain carbohydrate turn into blood glucose when they are digested. Glucose in the blood is necessary, but it's important that the levels stay within the target range set by your health care provider. Blood glucose is the fuel for your body and it is the nourishment that your baby receives from you.

Carbohydrates are found in starches, fruits, and milk. Sweets and desserts can have large amounts of carbohydrates. The following dietary recommendations are meant to help you maintain safe blood sugar levels.

1. **Distribute your foods between 3 meals and 2-3 snacks...**

Eating too much at one time can cause the blood sugar to rise too much. Don't skip meals. Smaller more frequent meals help control your blood sugar. In addition, you have increased nutritional needs during your pregnancy, and your baby is counting on you to provide balanced nutrition.

2. **Eat reasonable portions of starch...**

Starchy foods eventually turn into glucose so it's important not to be excessive. However, starch should be included at every meal. A reasonable portion is about 1 cup of total starch per meal, or 2 pieces of bread.

3. **One cup of milk at a time...**

Milk is a healthy food and it is an important source of calcium. Milk is a liquid form of carbohydrate and drinking too much at once can raise the blood sugar. Do not have milk at breakfast.

4. **Limit fruit portions....**

Fruit is a healthy food, but it is high in natural sugars. You may eat 1-3 portions of fruit per day, but only eat one at a time. A portion of fruit is one very small fruit, or ½ large fruit, or about ½ cup of mixed fruit. Don't use fruit that has been canned in syrup.

5. **Breakfast Matters...**

Blood sugar can be difficult to control in the mornings because of normal changes in hormone levels.

- Refined cereals, fruits, and even milk may not be well tolerated in the morning meal. If your blood sugar value after breakfast goes too high after having these foods, then you should not eat them for breakfast.
- A breakfast that consists of whole grain starch plus protein is usually the best.



6. **Avoid fruit juice...**

It takes several fruits to make a glass of juice. Juice is a concentrated source of carbohydrate. Because it is liquid, juice can raise the blood sugar quickly.

7. **Strictly limit sweets and desserts....**

Cakes, cookies, candies, and pastries tend to have excessive amounts of carbohydrate. These foods often contain large amounts of fat and offer very little in terms of nutrition. Avoid all regular sodas and sugar-sweetened beverages.

8. **Stay away from added sugars....**

Don't add sugar, honey, or syrup to your foods.

9. **Use artificial sweeteners instead of added sugars....**

The following sweeteners have been approved as safe for use during pregnancy: Aspartame = Equal ®, NutraSweet ®, NatraTaste®, Acesulfame K = Sunett ®, Sucralose = Splenda ®

10. **When a product says its “sugar-free”, take a closer look...**

Products containing sugar-alcohols are often labeled “sugar free”, but they may still contain significant amounts of total carbohydrate. Look at the food label to see the grams of total carbohydrate contained.

- Sugar alcohols may have a laxative effect, or cause gas and bloating. The following are examples of sugar-alcohols: mannitol, maltitol, sorbitol, xylitol, isomalt, and hydrogenated starch hydrolysate.
- Some products that say they are sugar-free are indeed carbohydrate-free and they will not affect the blood sugar. Examples include diet sodas and sugar-free Jello ®.

11. **What's next?**

Meet with the Registered Dietitian to have your diet assessed. The amount of carbohydrate that you need at meals and snack will be calculated. You will be taught to count carbohydrates.

Keep food records. Be sure to record all of the foods that you eat and also the amount you eat. Use measuring cups when possible.



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