Diabetes Nutrition Tips: 6 Foods You’ll Love

Diabetics face special dietary challenges in order to control their blood sugar levels and remain in good health. For a person with diabetes, these food selections not only keep their diabetes under control, they also help prevent further health complications down the road. There are even benefits to using this diet if you don’t have diabetes — those who are at risk for developing diabetes may be able to prevent or delay the onset of the disease by using this health-conscious diet. Read on to find out about the best food choices available for diabetics.

1. **Fish** One of the best choices for diabetics is fish. This food choice contains plenty of protein without the high fat content found in meat and poultry. Furthermore, fish contain a significant amount of omega-3 fatty acids, which are excellent for keeping triglyceride levels low and your heart healthy. Individuals with diabetes should try to eat fish at least twice a week. Almost any type of fish is a great choice, including cod, halibut, salmon, herring, mackerel and tuna. The only fish to avoid are any type of fried fish or fish that have high mercury levels, like swordfish, king mackerel and tilefish.

2. **Vegetables** Veggies are obviously a good choice for anyone who wants to stay healthy, but they offer special advantages for people with diabetes. First of all, they contain high levels of fiber, which helps you to feel full while also helping to control blood sugar levels and prevent heart disease. Vegetables are low in calories, so they can help diabetics to avoid excessive weight gain as well. Any vegetable is a good choice, but don’t overdo it on the starchy vegetables like potatoes, peas and corn since these have more calories than other veggies. Try to focus on vegetables like spinach, broccoli or carrots. Ideally, people with diabetes should eat four or five servings of vegetables a day.

3. **Fruit** Like vegetables, fruits are also considered a healthy food choice because of their nutritional benefits. For diabetics, however, fruit is something that can’t be eaten in large quantities because of the natural sugar content. That doesn’t mean fruit is a bad food choice, by any means. Rather, fruit has the high fiber and low calories content that offer many of the same benefits as vegetables. Plus, fruits contain antioxidants, like grapefruit, which can protect the heart, nerves and eyes. The best fruits for diabetics to eat are fresh produce rather than juice since the fiber in the skin, flesh and seeds are lost in the juicing process. Diabetics should try to eat no more than three or four servings of fruit per day to keep their blood sugar levels at a health level.

4. **Legumes** As mentioned before, fiber has a host of great health benefits that are particularly great for diabetics. And since legumes like beans and peas are one of the very best sources of dietary fiber, it’s no surprise that they are recommended for diabetics. Legumes are known to help you feel full because of this high fiber content, but there’s also another hidden benefit in this food: the fiber also slows digestion, which is perfect for keeping blood sugar levels from spiking right after eating. Instead, eating legumes may even help lower blood sugar levels. Whether canned or fresh, beans are a great addition to any meal for diabetics. Some of the best choices in this category include black beans, peas and lentils.

5. **Nuts** Although they should be consumed in moderation, nuts are an excellent snack option for diabetics. They contain “good fats” which reduce insulin resistance, make blood sugar easier to regulate even protect your heart by lowering...
cholesterol levels. Additionally, nuts contain fiber, magnesium and vitamin E, which act as an antioxidant in the body. They do contain a lot of calories, however, so they should be eaten in smaller amounts. A few options in this category include pecans, walnuts and almonds.

6. Whole Grains Because carbohydrates have such a significant effect on blood sugar levels, it’s very important for people with diabetes to be careful to restrict their carbohydrate intake to whole grains whenever possible. Like many of the other foods on this list, whole grains have more fiber and fewer calories. Look for whole grains in cereals, breads, brown rice, flour and tortillas.

Although there are other foods that diabetics can certainly enjoy, the ones listed here are by far the best choices for a diabetic diet. A few of the key foods that should be avoided include red meat, white bread and fried foods. As always, consult your doctor about the best diet for your personal situation before making any significant diet changes.

Southwestern Grilled Salmon
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon chili powder
dash of salt
freshly ground pepper
4 (4 ounce) skinless salmon fillets
1 lime, cut into wedges

Prepare grill to medium-high heat. Coats grill rack with cooking spray. Combine cumin, chili powder, salt and pepper. Rub spice blend on both sides of salmon. Place salmon on grill 4 minutes on each side or until done. Serve with a squeeze of lime and Black Bean Corn Salsa. Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional Facts: 1 serving equals 235 calories, 1g carbohydrates, 15g fat (3g saturated fat), 62 mg cholesterol, 90 mg sodium, calories from fat 58%.

Black Bean Corn Salsa
1 (15.25 ounce) can low-sodium whole kernel corn, rinsed
1 (16 ounce) can low-sodium black beans, rinsed
1 cup chopped fresh tomato, or 1 (14.5 ounce) can fire roasted tomatoes
1 red pepper, finely chopped, or 1 (12 ounce) jar roasted red peppers, drained and chopped
2 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 tablespoon dried basil
1 teaspoon cumin
2 tablespoons lime juice
Baked tortilla chips

Combine all ingredients except tortilla chips. Refrigerate 1 to 2 hours before serving. Serve salsa with baked chips, or top grilled chicken, halibut, or salmon. Makes 16 – 2 ounce servings.

Nutritional Facts: 1 serving equals 118 calories, 6g fiber, 2g sugar, 4mg sodium, calories from fat 40%.

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<thead>
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<th>Label Lingo:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fat-Free</td>
<td>Less than 0.5 gram of fat per serving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-Fat</td>
<td>3 grams of fat or less per serving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-Calorie</td>
<td>40 calories or less per serving</td>
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<td>Light</td>
<td>½ fewer calories or ½ less fat than the regular version, OR no more than ½ the sodium of the higher-sodium version</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Low-Sodium</td>
<td>140 milligrams of sodium or less per serving</td>
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Substitutions made simple:

Instead of: | Try:
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1 c whole milk | 1 c of skim milk |
1 c whipping cream | 1 c of evaporated milk (well-chilled) |
½ c oil | ½ c of applesauce (in baked goods) |
⅛ c sugar | 6 packets of aspartame or saccharin sweetener |
1 c mayonnaise | 1 c of light mayonnaise |
1 whole egg | 2 egg whites |
Regular pudding or gelatin (c=cup) | Sugar-free pudding or gelatin |

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