

Department of Nutrition and Dietetics

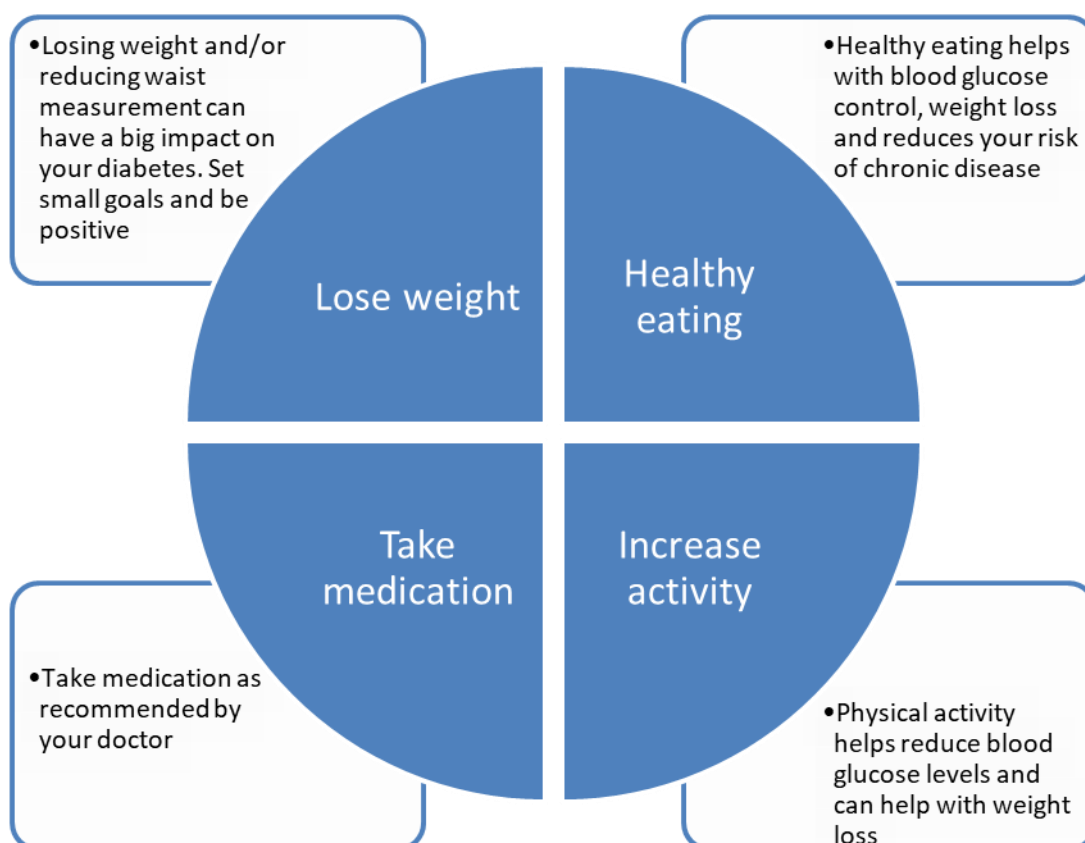
Diabetes - How to take control

This information includes diet and lifestyle tips for those with Type 2 diabetes who would benefit from improving control of their blood glucose (often also called blood sugar).

This sheet is **not** for those with a poor appetite, or the frail elderly.

What can you do?

There are 4 things that you can do to treat Type 2 diabetes:



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Remember - You can make a big difference to your diabetes and health. Learn more and take control. Aim to change habits so that this becomes a different way of living.

Lose weight

Carrying extra weight means it is more difficult for glucose to leave your blood. Losing even 5-10% of your body weight can noticeably improve your blood glucose levels. There is no one ideal diet, which works for everyone.

Research shows that all of the following diets can help people lose weight:

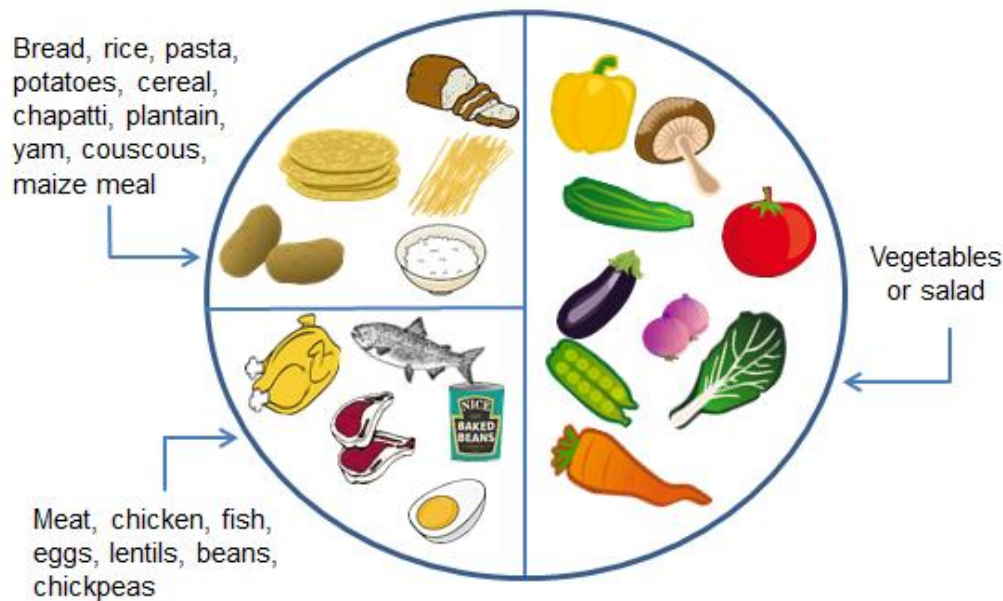
- low-energy diet,
- low-carbohydrate diet,
- Mediterranean diet,
- low-fat healthy eating
- intermittent fasting

The majority of people who have been diagnosed recently and lose more than 15 kg of their body weight can put their type 2 diabetes into remission. You can speak to your dietitian if you want more information on this.

Aim to shift your energy balance by reducing your calorie intake, and increasing your physical activity. Food and drink provide calories or “fuel” for the body. If you take in less fuel than your body needs each day, your body will start to use up fat stores. Try to:

- Reduce your portion sizes, try using a smaller plate. Eat slowly, and stop eating as soon as you are satisfied, rather than continuing until the plate is empty.
- Avoid foods high in fat or sugar, or have only occasionally such as fried foods, pastry, chocolate, non-diet fizzy drinks, cakes and sweets.
- Include more vegetables or salad at mealtimes. These are low in calories, and contain plenty of vitamins & minerals, with fibre to fill you up. Aim for ½ of your plate to be vegetables or salad, with about 1/4 protein, and 1/4 carbohydrate.

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- Choose lean sources of protein such as chicken, fish, eggs, pulses. Avoid adding extra fat or oil, and grill, boil, or steam rather than fry.
- Try to pause before you have a snack, and think “Am I hungry?” If not, then try to do something else to distract yourself. If you are hungry, choose a healthy snack.
- Reduce your alcohol intake – a pint of beer or glass of wine contains about 170-250 calories, so these can soon add up.

Healthy eating

Foods have different amounts of the three main types of food: carbohydrates, protein or fat.

All carbohydrates are broken down to glucose; therefore foods containing carbohydrates will increase your blood glucose levels. Many people find it useful to spread their carbohydrates throughout the day and may also reduce their overall intake of carbohydrates. A healthy way to do this is to:

- Limit your intake of processed carbohydrates. Aim to swap white varieties of bread, rice, pasta and/or chapattis for the wholemeal/wholegrain varieties. Reduce your intake of foods with added sugar by choosing diet or sugar-free/no-added sugar alternatives to fizzy drinks, squashes and yoghurts and avoiding snacks such as cakes, biscuits, chocolate, or have only occasionally.

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- Choose high-fibre, low-glycaemic-index sources of carbohydrate in the diet, such as vegetables, fruit, pulses and wholegrains. These have a gentler effect on your blood glucose. Increasing your fibre intake will help keep you fuller for longer, which helps with weight loss.

Protein and fat have a smaller and indirect effect on blood glucose. The changes below would help to reduce your overall blood glucose levels:

- Reduce the intake of foods containing saturated and trans fatty acids, such as:
 - red or fatty meat such as lamb, mutton or beef
 - processed meat like ham, sausage or bacon
 - full-fat dairy products, especially cheese
 - baked goods such as pastry, pies and biscuits.
- Try to replace some animal protein (meat, eggs and dairy foods) with plant protein (tofu, soya mince or soya milk/yoghurt, beans, lentils, chickpeas or other meat alternatives such as QuornTM).

People with diabetes are at a higher risk of cardio-vascular disease. Therefore, it is even more important to follow a healthy, balanced diet, such as the Mediterranean diet or similar.

Increase activity

Increasing activity burns more calories, helps reduce your blood glucose, and can also help to keep your joints healthy and improve your mood.

Build up your activity slowly, and limit sitting down time. The current recommendations for physical activity are 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity over a week, **or** 75 minutes of intense activity a week. In addition to that, you should do a muscle strengthening activity twice a week.

Moderate intensity activity raises your heart rate and makes you breathe faster and feel warmer, but you can still hold a conversation, for example brisk walking, doing the vacuuming, water aerobics. More intense activity is when you are breathing hard and fast and can't say more than a few words, e.g. running, aerobics, playing football.

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Some examples of muscle strengthening activities are exercises that use your own body weight (e.g. sit-ups, push-ups), doing yoga or Pilates, lifting weights or using resistance bands, or heavy gardening (e.g. digging or shovelling).

Take medication

Take medication if prescribed by your doctor – but remember that changes to your diet and activity levels will help you to control your blood glucose alongside the medication.

Useful sources of information

NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk/conditions/diabetes)

NHS Exercise (<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>)

Diabetes UK (www.diabetes.org.uk)

Useful contacts

Diabetes Dietitians Coventry

Contact No: 024 7696 6161

Diabetes Dietitian Rugby

Contact No: 01788 663242

This leaflet was produced by Coventry Dietitians, University Hospitals Coventry & Warwickshire NHS Trust. If you would like further information, they can be contacted on tel. 024 7696 6161.

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