

Healthy Eating with Prediabetes

What is prediabetes?

Prediabetes is when your blood sugar (glucose) levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be called diabetes.

Insulin is made in your body. After you eat, insulin helps the sugar in your blood move into your cells. This gives you energy.

When you have prediabetes, insulin doesn't work as well as it did before. This causes high blood sugar levels.

Many people with high blood sugar will get type 2 diabetes.

A healthy lifestyle to lower the risk of type 2 diabetes

The healthy lifestyle habits in this handout can help lower your risk for diabetes. Everybody's journey is different! If you're ready to make a change, you can choose what works best for you.

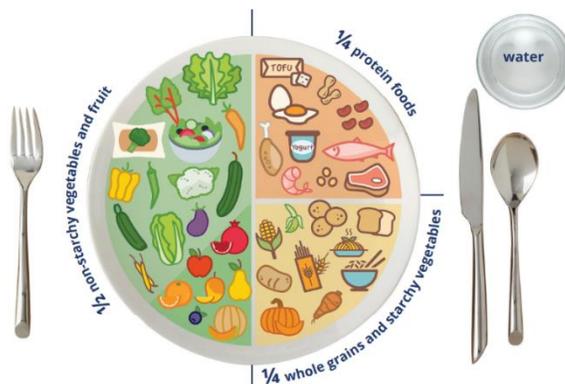
Follow the Balanced Plate

Eat 3 meals a day. Space meals 4 to 6 hours apart. Spreading your food over the day helps manage blood sugar.

Snacks may reduce hunger between meals. Include snacks if they help you eat smaller portions at your next meal.

Fill your plate like the one below to spread carbohydrates over the day:

- Cover $\frac{1}{2}$ of your plate with non-starchy vegetables. Some non-starchy vegetables are broccoli, bell peppers, carrots, cucumbers, and dark leafy greens. A portion of fruit the size of a tennis ball, or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (125 mL) may also be included in this part of the plate.
- Put whole grain products and starchy vegetables on $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plate. Some starchy vegetables are potatoes, yams, corn, squash, and parsnips.
- Put protein foods on $\frac{1}{4}$ of the plate. Some protein foods are meat, fish, eggs, cheese, and tofu.



Limit sweet foods and foods with added sugars

Sweet foods and foods and beverages with added sugar quickly raises blood sugar. Use the tips to eat less added sugar:

- Drink water most often.
- Choose water or sugar-free drinks instead of juice or drinks with added sugar like regular pop, iced tea, and sugar-sweetened coffee and tea drinks.
- Choose whole fruit instead of juice.
- Limit sugar, jam, honey, desserts, candy, syrups, and sweet sauces.
- Ask your dietitian about using sugar substitutes to sweeten foods like coffee, tea, and baking.

Eat more fibre

Fibre slows the movement of sugar into your blood. This helps to keep blood sugar from rising too high after eating.

Eating more fibre may also help lower your risk of heart disease. Aim to eat 30 grams (g) of fibre or more each day.

Read the Nutrition Facts table on food packages to find foods higher in fibre. The higher the % Daily Value the more fibre is in one serving.

Nutrition Facts	
Per ¼ cup (30 g)	
Calories 110	% Daily Value*
Fat 1 g	2 %
Saturated 0.2 g	1 %
+Trans 0 g	
Carbohydrate 22 g	
Fibre 5 g	20 %
Sugars 4 g	15 %
Protein 3 g	
Cholesterol 0 mg	
Sodium 261 mg	11 %
Potassium 300 mg	6 %
Calcium 22 mg	2 %
Iron 4 mg	30 %

*5% or less is a little, 15% or more is a lot

Use these tips to choose high fibre foods.

- Choose whole grain breads, cereals, crackers, pasta, whole wheat pasta, whole wheat couscous, quinoa, barley, oats, and brown rice.
- Try a new whole grain like quinoa, barley, bulgur in a side dish.
- Sprinkle 1-2 tbsp (15-30 mL) high fibre cereal (4 g of fibre or more) on yogurt, applesauce, salads, casseroles.
- Eat legumes such as split peas, beans, and lentils often. Add them to soups, casseroles, salads, and spaghetti sauce.
- Choose vegetables or fruit at every meal and snack.
- Eat these fruits more often: apples, oranges, berries, pears, cherries, plums.

Drink more fluid when you increase the amount of fibre you eat. Drink at least 9–12 cups (2.25–3 L) of fluid each day. Choose water, coffee, tea, and other sugar-free beverages.

Choose unsaturated fats

People with prediabetes are more likely to get heart disease. Eating more unsaturated fat and less saturated fat can decrease your risk.

Replace saturated fats with small amounts of unsaturated fats like the ones listed below:

- soft margarine
- oils: canola, olive, peanut, and sunflower
- avocado, nuts and seeds, and nut butters
- ground flax seeds, chia seeds, or hemp seeds
- fish instead of other animal proteins

Use the **tip of your thumb** to guide your portions of oils and fats at meals.



Choose less saturated fat:

These fats may increase your risk of heart disease. Choose less often:

- cream and ice cream
- coconut oil, lard, butter, and hard margarine
- processed meat like bacon, wieners, deli meat, and sausage
- deep fried foods
- snack foods like chips, salty snacks, baked goods, cookies, donuts, and chocolate bars
- processed cheese and cheese spreads

Be active

Activity helps to lower blood sugar by helping the body use sugar for energy.

- Be active for at least 30 minutes each day, 5 to 7 days a week.
- Start with a few minutes a day and build up to 30 minutes.
- Aim for at least 150 minutes (2½ hours) a week of activities that make your heart beat faster, like brisk walking, swimming, bike riding, sports, or running. You should breathe faster but still be able to talk.
- On at least 2 days of the week do muscle strengthening activities using major muscle groups such as lifting weights, using resistance bands, or sit ups, squats, and wall push-ups.

If you haven't been active for a long time, talk to your doctor about your activity plans before you start.

As well as being active 150 minutes a week, it's important to break up sitting time. Sitting time is time watching TV, playing video games, using the computer at home or work, reading, and doing homework.

Plan to get up and move around if you are sitting for more than 30 minutes at a time.

Weight and diabetes risk

Carrying extra weight can increase your risk for type 2 diabetes.

This handout contains many lifestyle choices for your weight and health. For support with weight and health, talk to your dietitian or doctor.

Next steps

This handout includes lifestyle choices that can help you manage your prediabetes. Change can be hard, especially if you try to make too many changes at once. To learn more, visit ahs.ca/nutritionhandouts and search "setting goals".

Ask your healthcare provider if you would like support with goal setting.

For more support



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on ahs.ca/811.
- Visit ahs.ca/nutrition.
- Call, text or chat with 211 Alberta (<https://ab.211.ca/>). It is a provincial directory of financial benefits, programs, and services.

Sample meal ideas

The meal ideas below give examples of how to use the tips in this handout to put together meals and snacks. These are samples only; they don't replace the advice of your healthcare team. Choose the small or large meal plan based on your appetite. Drink water throughout the day.

Small Meal Plan	Large Meal Plan
<p>Breakfast</p> <p>1 whole grain English muffin 2 egg omelet with: 1 oz (30 g) cheddar cheese ½ cup (125 mL) onions, tomato, mushrooms</p>	<p>Breakfast</p> <p>1½ cups (375 mL) cooked oatmeal 2 Tbsp (30 mL) ground flax seed Pinch of cinnamon ½ cup (125 mL) berries 1 cup (250 mL) milk</p>
<p>Lunch</p> <p>1 cup (250 mL) lentil soup 3–4 whole grain crackers (30 g) 1 medium orange ½ cup (125 mL) carrots</p>	<p>Lunch</p> <p>Chicken sandwich with: 2 slices of whole grain bread 2½ oz (75 g) chicken breast, sliced ⅙ avocado or tomato, sliced ½ cup (125 mL) lettuce 1 tsp mustard ½ cup (125 mL) cucumber, sliced 1 cup (250 mL) milk 1 medium apple</p>
<p>Supper</p> <p>2½ oz (75 g) baked salmon 1 cup (250 mL) brown rice, cooked 1 cup (250 mL) steamed green beans ½ cup (125 mL) sliced tomatoes 1 cup (250 mL) milk 1 small pear</p>	<p>Supper</p> <p>2½ oz (75 g) lean steak 1 cup (250 mL) baked yams or sweet potato ½ cup (125 mL) roasted cauliflower 1 cup (250 mL) mixed greens 2 Tbsp (30 mL) sunflower seeds 1 Tbsp (15 mL) salad dressing 1 cup (250 mL) milk 15 grapes or 1 cup (250 mL)</p>

Snacks: If you need help to keep portions smaller at meals, you may need a snack between meals.

Smaller snacks	Larger snacks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 cups (500 mL) plain popcorn with dill or Italian herbs • 1 cup (250 mL) carrots, celery, and 2 Tbsp (30 mL) salad dressing • ¾ cup (175 mL) sugar-free yogurt • 3–6 (30 g) whole grain or rye crackers • 1 apple, sliced, with cinnamon • 1 cup (250 mL) milk or fortified unsweetened soy beverage • 1 cup (250 mL) broccoli, cucumbers and ¼ cup (60 mL) hummus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ cup (125 mL) low sodium cottage cheese with ½ cup (125 mL) pineapple chunks drained • 2–3 rye crackers and 1 oz (30 g) cheese • ¾ cup (175 mL) plain Greek yogurt with ½ cup (125 mL) sliced strawberries, and ⅓ cup (75 mL) high fibre cereal • 1 slice of whole grain toast with 1 Tbsp (15 mL) nut butter, and ½ banana sliced on top • 1 (30 g) high fibre granola bar (4 grams of fibre or higher) and ¼ cup (60 mL) unsalted nuts