

Three Activities to Help Manage Type 2 Diabetes

These three activities provide examples of how Direct Support Professionals (DSPs) can help the individuals they support with managing their type 2 diabetes.

Introduction

Someone with type 2 diabetes can manage their diabetes by keeping a healthy weight, eating healthy foods, and exercising regularly.

A special diet can help people with diabetes stay healthy by having the right level of sugar in their blood. Individuals with type 2 diabetes should always consult their doctor or nutritionist to see if a special diet would be right for them. As part of someone's support team, you can help the individual you support follow their diet by making sure they are eating the right foods in the right amounts. Here are three common activities to help manage type 2 diabetes: two for special diets and one for checking blood sugar.

Exchange List Plan

This exchange list separates foods into different groups, like meats, fats, and carbohydrates. An individual's doctor or nutritionist may give them a personal meal plan that lists how much food to eat from each group every day. Here is a basic overview of an exchange list from Diabetes Education:

Food group (one serving)	Carbohydrate (grams)	Protein (grams)	Fat (grams)	Calories
I. Starch/Bread	15	3	Very little	80
II. Meat				
Very Lean	-	7	0-1	35
Lean	-	7	3	55
Medium-Fat	-	7	5	75
High-Fat	-	7	8	100
III. Vegetable	5	2	-	25
IV. Fruit	15	-	-	60
V. Milk				
Skim	12	8	0-3	90
Low-fat (1-2%)	12	8	5	120
Whole	12	8	8	150
VI. Fat	-	-	5	45

Individuals can use an exchange list to choose their meals. Their personal meal plan may indicate how many meat, fat, or carbohydrate "exchanges" the person can eat at each meal.

Carbohydrate Counting

Carbohydrate counting allows the DSP or the individual supported to know the number of carbohydrates included in each meal before eating. Most packaged foods list carbohydrate amounts on the label. The individual’s doctor will tell them how much insulin to take for the number of carbohydrates they plan to eat.



For this box of pasta, we can see that a serving is 1/8 of the box contents or 2/3 of a cup. That serving has:

1. 230 calories
2. 37g of carbohydrates

If a meal was going to include spaghetti and meatballs, could you find out the total amount of carbohydrates in that meal?

Ingredient (one serving each)	Calories	Carbo- hydrates
Pasta	230	37g
Premade meatballs made with lean meat	200	18g
Tomato sauce	60	10g
Shredded parmesan cheese	100	1g
TOTAL	590	56g

Carbohydrates generally provide about 45-65% of a person’s daily calories. For most people with type 1 diabetes, a reasonable amount of carbohydrates to include each day is 150-250 grams. The intake of carbohydrates can be spread out throughout the day to balance blood sugar levels.

Self-Checks of Blood Sugar

This third activity involves having a record of the individual’s blood sugar levels. Each section explains when to check blood sugar: before each meal, 1 to 2 hours after each meal, and at bedtime. Each time blood sugar is checked, the date, time, and results should be recorded. This blood sugar record can be shared during health care visits. Reinforce the goals of maintaining a healthy diet and keeping a daily blood sugar record with the individual you support!

	Date	Time	Result
My blood sugar before meals: Usual goal 80 to 130* My goal _____			
My blood sugar 1-2 hours after meals: Usual goal below 180* My goal _____			
My blood sugar at bedtime: Usual goal 110 to 150* My goal _____			

*Blood sugar goals may be different for older adults (over 65), for people diagnosed with diabetes over many years, or for those who have other health problems like heart disease.

Additional Resources

- Full Exchange List from Diabetes Education:
<https://diabetesed.net/page/files/THE-DIABETIC-EXCHANGE-LIST.pdf>
- Counting Carbohydrates (from University of California, San Francisco):
<https://dte.ucsf.edu/living-with-diabetes/diet-and-nutrition/understanding-carbohydrates/counting-carbohydrates/>
- From the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:
<https://www.niddk.nih.gov/health-information/diabetes/overview/managing-diabetes/4-steps>