# Diabetes, Feeding Your Child

When a child is diagnosed with diabetes, there is always a concern about food. Food is important because it provides the nutrition needed for growth and development. Foods also play a role in controlling and maintaining blood glucose (*sugar*) and preventing hypoglycemia (*low blood glucose*).

## FEEDING YOUR INFANT

An infant with diabetes eats on a normal schedule. Breast milk or formula are both appropriate, and insulin is given, based on blood glucose levels. After infancy, it is likely that the registered dietitian will set up a weekly meal plan.

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## MEAL PLANNING

Approaches to meal planning vary. A registered dietitian can recommend the right meal plan for your child based on their age, size, activity, likes and dislikes, and religious or ethnic beliefs. The registered dietitian may focus on food groups, exchanges, or carbohydrates. With whatever method you follow, healthy eating habits are the key.

Feeding a child with diabetes should not seem like a chore. However, it is the parent's job to offer healthy choices. Meals that are good for your child are good for the whole family. A healthy diet should include foods from all food groups. This includes meats, fruits, vegetables, and occasional sweets. Eat three (3) meals each day. Most children may also have 2-3 snacks each day.

## TIPS TO ENCOURAGE GOOD NUTRITION

- Promote water as the beverage of choice.
- Increase fiber. Encourage whole grains in cereals, bread, beans, and popcorn.
- Increase fruit and vegetables. Keep cut-up veggies available in the refrigerator. "Sneak" extra vegetables into stews, chili, and stir-fry dishes.
- Plan desserts twice a week. Encourage consistency with the meal plan.

## HELP WHEN EATING OUT OR AT SCHOOL

- Beware of "super-sizing."
- Avoid buffets. They make it difficult to know the content and portion size.
- Stick to foods you recognize, and ones you know how to count.
- Avoid excess high fat foods.
- Try to stick to normal mealtimes. Always carry a snack, in case of a delay.
- Work with the school system to share and receive the information you need.
- Special occasions, or holiday cakes or treats can be worked into the meal plan.

## HEALTHY SNACK OPTIONS

This is not a complete list, but it will give you ideas of what you might offer your child, in place of less healthy options. Work with your registered dietitian for more suggestions:

- Raisins.
- Peanut butter crackers.
- Animal crackers.
- Apple slices.
- Celery with peanut butter.
- Carrot sticks.
- Cheese sticks.

- Yogurt.
- Pretzels and milk.
- Beef jerky and crackers.

## BLOOD GLUCOSE GOALS

Blood glucose (*sugar*) goals for your child will vary, depending on their age and the treatment goals set by their caregiver. There are three factors that affect blood glucose control: food, exercise or physical activity, and insulin. Your child may need extra food or less insulin with increased activity. Your caregiver will help you with these adjustments.

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