
It's a family affair

Children with Type 2 Diabetes

Although type 2 diabetes usually develops in adulthood, increasing numbers of children, adolescents and teenagers in high-risk populations are being diagnosed. High-risk groups include people of Aboriginal, Asian, Caribbean and African, Hispanic, or South Asian descent.

Unhealthy weight gain and physical inactivity increase children's risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Children with type 2 diabetes and their families face special challenges. They need care that is individualized and geared to the needs of the child and his/her family. Living with a chronic illness can be difficult, especially for children. In addition, teenagers struggle with many issues that may prevent them from making appropriate choices.

To help growing and maturing children and their families live successfully with type 2 diabetes:

- Care should be coordinated with the pediatric diabetes healthcare team.
- Programs for teenagers need to address the lifestyle and health habits of the entire family.
- Special attention and intervention should be given to mental and emotional health (e.g. depression, self-destructive behaviour, smoking and alcohol consumption).
- Children and teens with diabetes should never be made to feel that it is their fault if their blood glucose level is out of range.



Healthy eating

Children and teenagers with type 2 diabetes should not be on restrictive diets. It is important to understand that there are no bad or forbidden foods. In moderation, all foods can fit into a healthy meal.

Meal planning tips

- This is a good age for learning, sharing food ideas and taking more responsibility. Encourage children to get involved in meal planning, shopping and preparing meals.
- Keep nutritious food in the house.
- Provide small lunches that can be eaten in the time provided.
- Healthy eating should always be considered. Remember that fast/junk food can be eaten in moderation with attention to the timing and the amount being eaten.
- As children grow into adolescence, nutrition recommendations will change. Your dietitian can assist in making appropriate adjustments.
- Aim for each meal to have foods from 3 out of the 4 food groups from *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* (Vegetables and Fruit, Grain Products, Milk and Alternatives, Meat and Alternatives).
- Encourage fibre rich foods in family meals. Fibre helps to slow the digestion of food, keep you feeling full longer and may help to control blood glucose levels.
- Choose foods with a low glycemic index.
- Eat at least one dark green and one orange vegetable each day. Look for dark vegetables such as broccoli, romaine lettuce and spinach. Choose orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes and winter squash.
- Frozen and canned vegetables and fruit are a good substitute when fresh vegetables and fruit are not available.
- Be patient when trying new foods. Foods may need to be served many times before being accepted.
- Encourage children and teenagers to drink water when thirsty. Avoid high calorie/high sugar beverages such as soft drinks, fruit beverages, fruit punches, hot chocolate and specialty drinks. Even 100% pure fruit juice contains sugar and should be limited to 125 – 375 mL ($\frac{1}{2}$ – $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups) per day.
- Control the amount of fat in the diet by using less fats and oils. Barbecuing, broiling and stir-frying instead of frying can reduce total fat intake. Use fewer processed and fried foods, many of which contain large amounts of hidden fats.

Planning snacks

Children and teenagers may require snacks as well as 3 balanced meals per day. Choose snack foods that belong to food groups from *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide*. **Keep snacks small and offer water for thirst.** Healthy snack choices can include raw vegetables or a piece of fruit. Choose lower