

How to Increase Energy and Protein in Your Diet When You Have Diabetes

This handout offers information on foods and drinks high in energy and protein. You may not always feel like eating during treatment. It may be hard to keep your weight the same or to gain weight. Drinking and eating high energy and high protein foods may help. Eating well and managing your blood sugar during treatment will help you feel well during your treatment and after it is finished.

What you can do to eat better during treatment:

- Eat small meals and snacks often throughout the day. Eat a small amount of food every 2 to 3 hours.
- Choose foods high in energy and protein (example: choose a cream soup and not a broth-based soup).
- Include a high protein food at each meal and snack (see a list of high protein food options below).
- Eat your biggest meal when your appetite is the greatest.
- Cook large batches of food when you feel better. Freeze meals for times you do not feel like cooking or eating.
- Carry snacks with you when you are away from home.
- Drink nutritional supplements for extra energy and protein (see page 3 for a list of options).
- Exercise to help improve your appetite (example: go for a short walk).
- Eat with your family and friends to make meals more enjoyable.
- Allow your family and friends to help you with grocery shopping and food preparation.

Protein

Your body uses protein to build and repair cells, build muscles, and fight infections. Adding protein to meals and snacks will help slow the absorption of carbohydrate (sugar) foods in your body. This can help you better manage your blood sugar.

Options of high protein foods to choose from:

- Meat (examples: poultry such as chicken or turkey, fish, seafood, beef, pork, lamb, goat, and canned tuna, salmon and sardines)
- Eggs
- Cheese, cottage cheese, and ricotta cheese
- Beans, lentils, legumes, and edamame
- Nut and seed butters (examples: peanut butter and almond butter)
- Nuts and seeds (examples: almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts, peanuts, pecans, pistachios, brazil nuts, and macadamia)

- Seeds (hemp hearts, pumpkin, sunflower, sesame, and chia)
- Tofu (regular and dessert), textured vegetable protein (TVP), tempeh
- Yogurt (examples: full fat Greek, Skyr®, full fat sour cream, or Kefir)
- Protein powder (examples: whey, soy, rice, pea, and hemp)
- Milk (examples: cow, goat, soy), ultra-filtered high protein milk (examples: Fairlife®, Joyya®, Natrel® plus, and Lactancia UltraPur ®)
- Dips (examples: Greek yogurt dip and hummus)

Energy

Energy (calories) comes from carbohydrates (sugars), fats, and proteins in food. You can increase your energy intake by eating foods high in calories more often. The foods listed below provide extra calories and have little effect on your blood sugar.

Options of high calorie foods to choose from:

- Avocado
- Butter, margarine or oil (add to food while cooking or spread onto foods before eating)
- Cream (add to drinks or foods such as mashed potatoes)
- Mayonnaise (in sandwich fillings and salads/dips, spread onto sandwiches)
- Pesto
- Whole milk, 3.25%
- Yogurt (examples: full fat Greek, Skyr®, full fat sour cream, or Kefir)
- Nuts and seeds
- Nut and seed butters (examples: peanut butter, almond butter)
- Cheese, cottage cheese, ricotta cheese, and cream cheese
- Salad dressings (look for reduced or low sugar)

Nutritional Supplements

It is important to get your calories, protein and other nutrients from a variety of foods. Nutritional supplements can help if you are unable to do this. There are many types of nutritional supplements. They include drinks, powders, and puddings. All nutritional supplements provide calories, protein and nutrients. Drink or eat nutritional supplements between meals or after meals. This can help you feel like eating at mealtimes.

Options of nutritional supplements for people with diabetes

Glucerna		Can be purchased at: - Grocery stores - Pharmacies - Online at glucerna.ca
Boost Carb Smart		Can be purchased at: - Grocery stores - Pharmacies - Online at madewithnestle.ca
Equate Diabetic		Can be purchased at: Walmart

Options of nutritional supplements with extra protein

Ensure Protein Max		Can be purchased at: - Shopper's Drug Mart - Walmart - Some grocery stores - Online at ensure.ca
Premier Protein		Can be purchased at: - Shopper's Drug Mart - Costco - Walmart
Fairlife Protein Shake		Can be purchased at: - Costco - Walmart - Online at amazon.ca

Ask to talk to a dietitian if you need help choosing a nutritional supplement.

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are a nutrient found in many foods. They break down into sugar in your body. Carbohydrates are your body's main source of energy. If you do not eat enough carbohydrates, your body will try to make sugar in other ways (example: break down your muscle). It is important to eat a diet balanced with carbohydrates, proteins, and fats to help control your blood sugar. Include moderate portion sizes of carbohydrate foods at meals (example: a fist sized serving of carbohydrate foods such as potatoes, rice, or pasta).

Limit foods very high in carbohydrates or added sugar as these can raise your blood sugars too high. Here is a list of carbohydrate foods to limit and choose from:

Carbohydrate foods to limit :	Carbohydrate foods to choose :
Candy and chocolates	Potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams
Baked goods (examples: cookies, cake, pie, brownies, tarts)	Rice (examples: parboiled, converted, basmati or brown rice)
Sugar sweetened beverages (examples: juice, regular pop, milkshakes)	Pasta (prepare al dente, firm)
White sugar, brown sugar, icing sugar, honey, molasses, maple syrup, jam, jelly, and marmalade	Breads (examples: whole grain, sourdough, rye, pumpernickel, roti, and chapati)
Ice cream, sherbert, freezies, and popsicles	• Popcorn • Barley • Couscous • Quinoa • Fruits • Oatmeal

Recipes

The recipes below offer options for high energy, high protein snacks or meals. The nutritional values are estimated and may change with the ingredients used.

Yogurt Smoothie

- 1 cup (250 millilitres) fruit (examples: banana and berries)
- 1/3 cup (80 millilitres) Greek or plain yogurt
- 1 cup (250 millilitres) whole milk (can add 2 tablespoons/30 millilitres of skim milk powder)
- 2 ice cubes

Mix all ingredients together in a blender. Keep leftovers in the fridge or freezer. Makes 2 servings. Energy = 165 calories and protein = 8 grams.

High Protein Pudding

- 1 package (125 grams) low sugar instant pudding mix
- 2 cups (500 millilitres) whole milk
- 2 tablespoons (30 millilitres) oil (examples: vegetable, corn, sunflower, and safflower)
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup (175 millilitres) skim milk powder

Mix all ingredients together. Put in the fridge or leave until pudding is set. Enjoy with whipped cream. Makes 4 servings. Energy = 310 calories and protein = 13 grams.

Tofu Shake

- 1 cup (250 millilitres) soy milk
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup (80 millilitres) soft tofu
- 1 teaspoon (5 millilitres) of vanilla extract
- 1 cup (250 millilitres) soft fruit (examples: bananas, canned fruits, berries)

Mix all ingredients together in a blender. Enjoy cold. Keep leftovers in fridge or freezer. Makes 2 servings. Energy = 135 calories and protein = 8 grams.

Ask to talk to a dietitian if you have questions or concerns about any of the information in this handout.

This handout was created by the Patient Education Program at the Durham Regional Cancer Centre/Lakeridge Health. It was last reviewed in January of 2025.