

# Diabetes food swap cheat sheet

Simple swaps for balanced blood sugar



Taking care of your diabetes doesn't mean giving up the foods you love — it's about making better-for-you choices. Use this cheat sheet to find simple food swaps that can help keep your blood sugar steady.

Food	Healthy swap	Even healthier swap	Why swap?
<b>Pasta</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whole wheat pasta<sup>1</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Veggie spirals (like zucchini or spaghetti squash)<sup>1</sup></li><li>• Chickpea or lentil pasta<sup>2</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer carbs (veggie spirals)<sup>1</sup></li><li>• More fiber and protein (chickpea/lentil pasta)<sup>2</sup></li></ul>
<b>Rice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Brown or black rice<sup>1</sup></li><li>• Quinoa<sup>1</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cauliflower rice<sup>1</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer carbs, more fiber<sup>1</sup></li></ul>
<b>Red meat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 90% lean red meat cuts (like round, top loin, sirloin, chuck shoulder, arm roasts)<sup>1</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lean white meats (like skinless turkey and chicken breasts)</li><li>• Pork tenderloin</li><li>• Fish</li><li>• Plant-based protein (like tofu, beans, or lentils)<sup>1</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer unhealthy fats<sup>1</sup></li></ul>
<b>Flour tortilla</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Whole-grain flour tortilla<sup>3</sup></li><li>• Corn tortilla<sup>3</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lettuce wrap<sup>3</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• More fiber (whole-grain flour tortilla, corn tortilla)<sup>3</sup></li><li>• Fewer carbs (lettuce wrap)<sup>3</sup></li></ul>
<b>Whole milk</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 1% milk<sup>1</sup></li><li>• Almond milk<sup>4</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Skim milk<sup>1</sup></li><li>• Soy milk<sup>4</sup></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fewer unhealthy fats<sup>1,4</sup></li></ul>



For more tips, you can talk to a registered dietitian (RD) to create meal plans that fit your needs and goals.

[Find an RD on myCigna®](#)

Food	Healthy swap	Even healthier swap	Why swap?
<b>Sugary cereal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Whole wheat cereal with little or no sugar added<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Oatmeal topped with berries and nuts<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher fiber, less sugar<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Ice cream</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frozen yogurt bar<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blended frozen banana<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More fiber, fewer unhealthy fats, less added sugar<sup>2,3</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Chips and pretzels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Baked chips<sup>6</sup></li> <li>Air-popped popcorn<sup>6</sup></li> <li>Rice cakes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pistachios or any unsalted or low-sodium nuts following the recommended serving size<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fewer unhealthy fats, more fiber, more protein<sup>2,6</sup></li> <li>Fewer carbs (pistachios)<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
<b>Candy and other sweets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruit<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruit less likely to cause blood sugar spikes (like berries, kiwi, melon, and citrus)<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More fiber,<sup>6</sup> less sugar<sup>7</sup></li> </ul>



## Making small changes can have an impact on your blood sugar and overall health.

Keep this guide handy as a simple way to make smarter choices while still enjoying the foods you love.



Quickly search and connect with hundreds of organizations near you. Find local food pantries, home-delivery meal services, food stamp assistance, and more.

**[Visit cignacommunity.findhelp.com](https://cignacommunity.findhelp.com)**

1. American Diabetes Association. "Easy, Healthy Food Substitutions for People with Diabetes." Last reviewed December 4, 2024. <https://diabetesfoodhub.org/blog/easy-healthy-food-substitutions-people-diabetes>

2. American Diabetes Association. "Satisfy Every Craving with These 7 Easy Swaps." Last reviewed July 24, 2023. <https://diabetesfoodhub.org/blog/satisfy-every-craving-these-7-easy-swaps>

3. Healthline. "From Brunch to Barbecue: Type 2 Diabetes-Friendly Swaps for Your Favorite Meals." Last reviewed February 27, 2024. <https://www.healthline.com/health/type-2-diabetes/makeovers-for-favorite-meals>

4. Everyday Health. "Which Milks Are Best for Diabetes?" Last revised February 20, 2025. <https://www.everydayhealth.com/diabetes/best-milks-for-diabetes/>

5. Cleveland Clinic. "Here's What To Know About Choosing Cereal if You Have Diabetes." Last reviewed March 20, 2024. <https://health.clevelandclinic.org/cereal-for-diabetes>

6. WebMD. "What to Know About Diabetes and Snacks." Last reviewed June 15, 2024. <https://www.webmd.com/diabetes/diabetes-snacks>

7. CNBC. "A nutritionist with type 1 diabetes shares the top 5 'food swaps' she eats to manage her blood sugar." Last reviewed October 14, 2022. <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/10/14/nutritionist-with-type-1-diabetes-shares-top-food-swaps-to-manage-blood-sugar.html>

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