

Eat Well, Be Well

The percentage of Americans with diabetes has nearly doubled in the past two decades, according to a new study in the *Annals of Internal Medicine*. While genetics often plays a role in whether or not you have diabetes, lifestyle also makes a big difference, both in preventing diabetes and in managing it once you are diagnosed. Eating well is especially important.

Follow these simple, healthy eating tips:

- Do not skip meals. Eat at least three well-balanced meals each day.
- Eat at consistent times every day and space meals to no more than five hours to six hours apart.
- Avoid concentrated sweets: regular syrups, sugar, honey, jam, jelly, hard candy, cake, pie, cookies, chewing gum, soft drinks and fruit drinks.
- Include fiber-rich foods in a daily meal plan by choosing whole grain breads, cereals, fresh fruits and vegetables and dried beans.
- Use fresh fruits or canned fruits packed in water or natural juices. Avoid fruit canned in “heavy” or “lite” syrups. All juices should be 100 percent fruit juice, unsweetened or “no added sugar.”
- Remember that “sugar-free” labels on foods, such as cakes, cookies and candies, does not mean the foods can be eaten freely and are completely sugar-free. Check labels for grams of total carbohydrates.
- Bake, broil or roast meats. Avoid frying or breading meats. Avoid adding extra servings of butter, margarine or cream sauces to vegetables.

In our faith communities, we can recognize how diabetes impacts our members and be intentional about how we share meals together. Start a “Healthy Potluck” policy that asks people to bring dishes that follow the tips above. Don’t serve beverages that are loaded with sugar. Be aware of people for whom eating well may be difficult—isolated seniors, people with disabilities, those with limited resources—and talk with them about what they would find helpful. How we live together in community can literally change someone’s life!

Wishing you joy and good health,
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