

Diabetes and diet – The importance of a balanced, diabetes-friendly diet



It might come as a bit of a surprise that a national health survey report published in 2019 showed that as many as 77 million individuals in India had diabetes. This number is expected to increase to a whopping 134 million by 2045!

While WHO recognises diabetes as among the top ten causes of death in the world, a domestic publication stated that every year, more people in India die from diabetes-related complications than terror.

Without a doubt, if left undiagnosed and untreated, diabetes can be a slow and stealthy killer.

Diabetes care

The good news is that diabetes can be controlled, and even better - reversed, with the right diabetes care. The patient's awareness of her/ his condition, attitude towards the treatment, exercise and adherence to diet

recommendations by the experts can go a long way in controlling diabetes and reversing the condition.

Diabetes care includes a healthy, 'freedom from diabetes' plan.

More explicitly, a diabetes-friendly plan is a diabetes-friendly diet that will help to control blood sugar, manage weight and control risk factors such as high blood pressure and high blood fats.

Diabetes diet

A diabetes diet is a food plan which incorporates the healthiest and tastiest foods, in moderate amounts, at regular mealtimes, every day. It is like a roadmap that can help a diabetic person achieve her/ his target of using insulin more effectively.

The diabetes diet comprises foods that have nutrients in abundance and are low in sugars, fat and calories. Fruits, vegetables and whole grains are the main ingredients of the diabetes diet.

Highlights of a diabetic diet

1. Have a balanced diet which includes green leafy vegetables for dietary fibre. These include spinach, amaranthus, broccoli, bok choy, cabbage as part of a main dish, soup, salad or a side dish with some lean protein like chicken, fish or tofu
2. Whole grains are a storehouse of fibre which is great for people with diabetes. What is more, whole grains are low on the glycaemic index, so they have less impact on blood glucose
3. Fish that are rich in omega-3 fatty acids are good for diabetics. The good fats keep the body functioning well and promote heart and brain health
4. Add some form of beans to most meals. Not only are they low on the glycaemic index (GI) scale, they are also better for blood sugar regulation than several starchy food options. In addition, they are rich in nutrients like iron, potassium, and magnesium
5. Keep an eye on portion size. The right quantity will depend on your physical structure and lifestyle. Too much or too little can be equally harmful
6. The Indian diabetes regimen includes fenugreek soaked in water overnight, powdered jamun seed infusion, jackfruit seed powder mixed in chappati atta and several other local remedies that can be taken after consultation with an expert, or while following a diabetes reversal program

Do not

1. Do not overeat: When you overeat, the extra calories and fat creates a spike in blood glucose. If this isn't controlled, it can lead to complications like hyperglycaemia or diabetic coma and even lead to long-term complications such as nerve, kidney and heart damage.
2. Do not consume the wrong kinds of food: Certain types of food such as refined carbohydrates, liquid sugars, unhealthy trans fats, margarine, butter, bakery products, dairy products, red meats, alcohol, deep fried foods and processed foods can cause blood sugar levels to rise. They can also increase the risk of heart disease and stroke by hastening the development of clogged and hardened arteries, so they are best avoided
High-fat dairy products and animal proteins such as butter, beef, fast foods, egg yolk, animal liver, organ meat, sausage and bacon should also be restricted to a bare minimum

The ideal Indian diabetic menu

Diabetics are advised to work on a diet plan that is nutritious, tasty and sustainable. A tasteless meal or a repetitive dish will only create dissatisfaction and despair, leading to the abandonment of the diet plan.

A good diabetes reversal program like *Freedom from Diabetes* offers several suggestions in the form of easily downloadable recipes. There are several options available for delicious breakfasts, snacks, lunches or dinners.

Here are a few recipes from the book. You can find plenty more [here](https://www.freedomfromdiabetes.org/blog/recipes) (hyperlink to <https://www.freedomfromdiabetes.org/blog/recipes>)

Breakfast

Kancheepuram Idli

Ingredients:

1 cup moong dal

¼ cup black gram dal

½ tsp fenugreek seeds

1- 2 green chillies

½ tsp dry ginger powder/ (sukku/sonti podi)

¾ tsp cumin seeds

10-12 black peppercorns

For the tempering:

1 tbsp gingelly oil

¼ tsp asafoetida/ hing

2-3 cashew nuts (break into small pieces)

Curry leaves

Method

Soak the dals for 6 hours.

Soak fenugreek seeds along with the dals.

Grind by adding water.

The consistency of the batter should be like rice idli batter.

Add salt to the batter and beat it nicely.

Keep covered in a warm place for fermenting for about 6 hours.

Grind ginger, chilli and cumin.

Fry cashews in 1 tsp oil.

Add all remaining ingredients to the batter 15 min before making idlis.

Mix well.

Keep covered for 10-15 min.

Now your batter is ready to make idlis.

Make idlis as usual.

Lunch

Muga Mole Randayi Recipe (A Konkani favourite)

Mooga mole means sprouted moong.

Ingredients

2 cups sprouted moong (Washed nicely to remove the skin)

½ cup vegetable pieces like raw banana, jackfruit or bamboo shoots

1 cup coconut (Frozen)

1 tsp coriander seeds

Pinch of asafoetida (Hing)

5-6 red chillies

½ tsp tamarind pulp

1 tsp mustard seeds

4-5 curry leaves

Oil

Salt

Method

Heat oil and fry coriander seeds & red chillies.

Grind with coconut, tamarind and Salt.

Cook moong and vegetables

Add the ground masala & bring to boil.

Heat oil fry mustard & curry leaves.

Add this tadka to the above dish & close the lid

Snack

Vegan Carrot cake

Ingredients:

2 cups Khapli wheat flour

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1/4 teaspoon salt

1- 1/4 cups water

1 - 1/4 cups chopped dates

1 cup raisins

1 teaspoon allspice powder

1 cup shredded carrots

1 cup chopped walnuts

1-1/3 cup carrot juice (or any other juice)

Water, as needed or some more juice depending upon the consistency of the batter.

Method:

1. Preheat oven for 15 minutes at 375F/190C. Lightly grease and line an 8 or 9-inch cake pan with parchment paper.
2. Sift together the flour, baking soda and salt. Set aside.
3. In a saucepan, combine the water, dates, raisins, and allspice powder. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 5 minutes.

4. Place the shredded carrots in a large bowl. Pour the hot liquid mixture on top of it and let it cool completely.

5. Once it is cool add the chopped walnuts and carrot juice; combine it well.

6. Add the dry ingredients to the wet ingredients and stir well together.

Dinner

Thukpa:

This is a popular one-pot meal prepared with vegetables or meat. Freedom From Diabetes has made the dish diabetes-friendly by adding khapli wheat dough strips instead of regular maida noodles

Ingredients

2 cups khapali wheat flour (atta)

2 tbsp mustard oil

3 tomatoes chopped

1 tsp lemon juice

¼ cup coriander leaves

½ cup spring onion greens chopped

½ cup spring onions chopped

1 cup radishes chopped

1 cup spinach chopped

1 tsp black pepper

1-½ tsp jeera powder

8 cloves garlic crushed

Salt to taste

Method

Heat oil.

Fry onions and garlic till translucent.

Add tomatoes and cook till mushy.

Add cumin powder, garam masala, pepper along with chopped vegetables.

Add water and bring to boil.

Knead dough from flour.

Make irregular bite-sized dough strips and place them in simmering broth.

Cook for 10 mins. Add salt and garnish with coriander and green onion leaves.

Serve thukpa hot.