

Diabetes Education



Nutrition Myths about White Foods Karen Shidler, RN, CDE



A frequent comment heard in the Diabetes Education Center is “I was told to stay away from white foods since I have diabetes.” This advice implies that white foods are “bad foods.” Why would someone think that?

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010 encourage everyone, including persons with diabetes, to eat more foods that are high in fiber and whole grains. These kinds of foods can help control blood glucose and blood cholesterol levels. Therefore, since bread made with processed white flour and white rice are low in fiber and whole grains, it is assumed they must be “bad.” Sugar is also viewed as off-limits if you have diabetes.

All or nothing rules like “no white foods” can be misleading. ***Should you avoid white milk and low-fat dairy products? How about onions, parsnips, turnips, cauliflower, or bananas? Pasta and potatoes? Should you never eat dessert?!***

Let’s take a closer look at each of these questions.

- Low-fat milk and dairy products are good sources of calcium and vitamin D and should be included as part of a healthy diet.
- White vegetables like onions, parsnips, turnips, cauliflower and even potatoes are high in fiber and many vitamins and minerals.
- The potato is best served baked and eaten with the fiber-rich skin.
- The other white vegetables are very low in carbohydrate and are healthy choices as long as they are not breaded, fried, or covered in cheese sauce, which adds calories and fat.

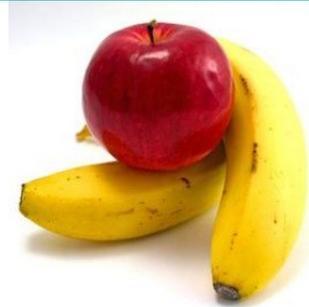


A healthy diet for persons with diabetes includes a variety of foods of all colors, emphasizing portion control and higher fiber.

Pasta can still be included in your meal plan with a few tips:

- Don't overcook it
- Control your portion size

You might want to try mixing some whole wheat pasta with regular pasta to add fiber, though. You can also add more low-carb vegetables in your pasta dishes to “stretch” them out. Follow similar guidelines for rice and bread, keeping portions small and experimenting with brown rice or whole grain breads, too.



Fruits with white flesh like bananas, apples, and pears also provide lots of fiber and other nutrients. However, their sweet taste comes from naturally-occurring sugars, so excess amounts of these fruits can raise your blood glucose.

Choose fresh fruits without added sugar whenever possible.

Let's talk about dessert now. ***The American Diabetes Association and the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics do no forbid sugar or dessert for persons with diabetes.*** Are you surprised?

They do recommend that any high-calorie foods or foods low in nutrients like these be used in limited quantities and frequencies. In other words, it's okay to have a cookie as a “treat” occasionally but not the whole package of cookies or dessert with every meal!

So, white foods are not all “bad” and can be included in a healthy diet with a little guidance. Mix them with other colorful, high-fiber foods and watch your portion sizes. Ask your doctor for a referral to a registered dietitian if you would like more assistance with your personal meal plan.



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For additional resources about healthy eating and diabetes, check out these websites:

- <http://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/>
- <http://www.diabetes.org/>
- <http://www.eatright.org/>
- <http://www.ndep.nih.gov/>

For any questions, you may contact Karen Shidler, RN, CDE by calling **574.753.1339** or emailing kshidler@logansportmemorial.org.
