

Helping you stay well

# Eating well with Diabetes

Information for you, your family, friends, & carers

**Diabetes is a common condition where the amount of glucose (sugar) in your blood is too high because the body cannot use it properly. Certain foods we eat are broken down to glucose in our bodies. A hormone called insulin, which is released from the pancreas, is needed for our bodies to use glucose for energy and prevent the amount in the blood from getting too high.**

If you have **Type 1 diabetes**, your body no longer produces insulin. This type of diabetes is treated with insulin injections.

If you have **Type 2 diabetes** your body cannot use insulin properly and/or you may no longer produce enough insulin. This type of diabetes is treated with a healthy diet, medication and/or insulin in some cases.



Good control of your blood sugar levels is important because high amounts of glucose in your blood can damage your arteries and small blood vessels. This can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and can lead to complications of diabetes such as problems with your vision, kidneys, and your feet.



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Hertfordshire  
**Independent Living Service**  
Supporting your independence

## Do I need to eat a special diet?

People with diabetes should follow the same healthy eating guidance recommended for everyone else. Please see our 'Eating for Good Health' booklet for more information on having a healthy balanced diet.

Remember to eat regular meals and include starchy food with every meal, such as bread, potatoes, pasta, rice, or breakfast cereal. This can help keep your blood glucose levels stable throughout the day.

### Can I have sugar?

It's a myth that people with diabetes should not eat any sugar.

**High sugar foods do not need to be left out of your diet altogether if you have diabetes, but these should be limited as part of a healthy diet.** We offer a range of sugar-free and low-sugar desserts, snacks, and drinks on our menus, if you want to choose these options.



### Can I eat fruit?

Fruit contains natural sugar but it also has essential vitamins, minerals and fibre, and is an important part of a healthy balanced diet.

**We offer fruit pots which provide one portion of fruit, and are suitable for people with diabetes.** If you tend to snack on fruit, make sure that you spread your portions throughout the day and don't eat too much at once. Fruit juice and dried fruit is high in natural sugar so only have small amounts, or try sugar-free squash or whole fruit instead.



## Which meals can I eat from the HILS menu?

All of our main meals are nutritionally balanced, and suitable for people with diabetes. We also have some reduced sugar versions of our desserts.

Our tea and breakfast menus are also suitable for people with diabetes. We offer reduced sugar juices and jellies, and no-added-sugar muesli or porridge.



## Weight and diabetes

### Does my weight matter?

Yes! If you are a healthy weight, your diabetes will be easier to manage. If you are over or underweight, this can make it harder to control your diabetes.

### What if I am overweight?

Being overweight can disrupt the way your body uses insulin. This is called insulin resistance. Excess weight around the middle of our bodies is thought to be the most problematic. Achieving a healthier weight can help your body use insulin more effectively and maintain better control of your blood-sugar levels. For more information and tips on healthy weight loss, please ask for our Achieving Healthy Weight Loss booklet.

# Weight and diabetes

## What if I am underweight?

If you are underweight it is important to achieve a healthy weight. Foods high in fat can help us gain weight but do not raise blood glucose levels.

## What if I am losing weight?

If you feel you are struggling to maintain your weight or you are losing weight, please contact the Nutrition & Wellbeing team who can provide you with our booklet Achieving Healthy Weight Gain which you may find helpful. You may also want to contact your GP if you are worried about your weight.

If you have any particular concerns about diabetes and your diet, or the options on the menu, please do not hesitate to contact our Nutrition & Wellbeing Team.

## We also have a selection of additional booklets and leaflets for the following health conditions:

Caring for someone with dementia, feeling forgetful, healthy heart, good bowel health, coeliac disease, kidney problems, chewing and eating difficulties, IBS, COPD, food labelling

This resource has been compiled using available current evidence and has been approved by a team of dietitians and nutritionists.

The information is for general use and should not replace individual tailored advice given by a healthcare professional.

For further information, please contact your local Support Team or visit our website on [www.hertsindependentliving.org](http://www.hertsindependentliving.org) or contact us directly through [nutrition@hertsindependentliving.org](mailto:nutrition@hertsindependentliving.org) Alternatively, please call Hertfordshire Independent Living Service on **0330 2000 103** (all calls charged at local rate).