

Diabetes and Family Meal Planning

When a loved one is first diagnosed with diabetes, it's common for family members to worry about meal planning. Will the person with diabetes need a whole separate diet? No, says diabetes educator and registered dietitian Janet Zusi of Lehigh Valley Hospital's Helwig Health and Diabetes Center.

Though you may have to make some adjustments, a little knowledge and planning will allow your family to enjoy the same meals, all together. Here's what you need to know:



- **Forget the "diabetic diet."** Just because a family member has diabetes doesn't mean he needs to eat special food. "He should eat the same high-fiber, low-fat food as the rest of the family," Zusi says. "What's healthy for a person with diabetes is healthy for everyone."
- **Don't single anyone out.** "People with diabetes don't want to be identified as 'the person with diabetes,'" says psychologist Jeffrey Knauss, Ed.D., who's had the disease since age 13. "Your loved one wants to fit in, not to have the kitchen—or the family—turned upside-down for him."
- **Incorporate favorite foods into a plan.** Loved ones with diabetes may need to cut down on certain foods they really enjoy, Knauss says. "The key is learning how to include smaller portions of those foods in their overall eating plan." If you don't know how to do that, contact a diabetes educator for help.
- **Have "emergency" foods ready.** "Put easy-to-find junk food 'goodies' out of sight, so family members—including the person with diabetes—don't automatically reach for them when they need a quick snack," Knauss says. Cut-up veggies or fruits are a good substitute.



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