Why do you need good food?

When you have diabetes in pregnancy, what you eat is important for:

- Good blood glucose (sugar) levels
- Growing baby
- Staying healthy

Food gives you energy! This energy comes from carbohydrates, protein and fat.

There are a lot of other things in food that you need to make the body work, such as vitamins and minerals.

- Eat a good variety of foods to get everything you need for a strong mum and baby. Check how much you need from each of the different food types.
- Have regular small meals - breakfast, lunch and tea
- Have some carbohydrate food at each meal and snack, but not too much.
Carbohydrates are long chains of sugar joined together. These long chains get digested by the body into glucose (sugar in your blood). Even though all carbohydrates are broken down into sugars by the body, not all foods that are high in carbohydrates taste sweet (e.g. potatoes, bread, etc).

There are four main types of food that have carbohydrates:

- **Fruit**
- **Milk, yoghurt, custard**
- **Starchy vegetables & legumes**
- **Bread and cereals**

Very sweet things - sugar, honey, syrup, lollies, sweet biscuits and sweet drinks have too much extra sugar. A tiny bit is OK, like a small teaspoon of sugar. Foods and drinks marked 'diet' or 'low joule' are low in sugar and don't affect your blood glucose levels.
Fruit - have 2 serves/day

A serve is a hand-sized piece - a medium orange or small banana, or 1 cup of tinned fruit (in juice, not syrup). Fruit is a good snack between meals.

Fruit gives you carbohydrates, vitamins, fibre and antioxidants.

Milk, yoghurt, custard
- have 2.5 serves/day

A serve is a big glass of milk or a 200g tub of 'diet' or natural yoghurt or ½ cup of custard.

If you get tummy trouble drinking milk, try drinking low lactose milk or soy milk with added calcium.

These foods give you carbohydrates, calcium for building bones and protein for building muscles and organs.
Bread and cereals

Have one cup or scoop of rice, pasta or noodles with a meal.

Bread and cereals contain carbohydrates and the wholegrain/brown types give you extra fibre and vitamins.

Starchy vegetables and legumes also contain carbohydrates

Bread and cereals, starchy vegetables and legumes all contain carbohydrates. Legumes include lentils, red kidney beans, baked beans and chick peas. If you eat too much at one meal, it can make your blood glucose levels too high. A dietitian can tell you how much carbohydrate to eat at a meal.
LOW CARBOHYDRATE FOODS: These foods don’t increase your blood glucose levels.

Other vegetables

Most vegetables don’t contain a lot of carbohydrates so they don’t increase your blood glucose levels. They have fibre and vitamins and can help fill you up.

Meat, fish, chicken, nuts

About as much as your hand each day

These foods don’t put your blood glucose levels up. They give you protein and iron.
**FATS**

**Good fats**
- Cut fat off meat & take skin off chicken before you cook it
- Cook in small amounts of a good oil (eg. canola, olive)
- Add lots of vegetables to meals
- Limit takeaways

**Bad fats**
**MEAL EXAMPLES**

**Breakfast:**
- [Image of a meal]
- or
- [Image of another meal]

**Snacks - one of:**
- [Image of snacks]

**Lunch or evening meal - one of:**
- [Image of a meal]
- or
- [Image of another meal]

You need to eat enough healthy food for baby to grow strong and healthy. If you eat well and exercise, and your blood glucose levels are still too high, you may need to inject some insulin.

...see booklet 'Starting Insulin Injections'

See your diabetes and pregnancy health team (e.g. health worker, doctors, diabetes educator, dietitian).
Acknowledgements:

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Other booklets in this series:

- How Your Body Works
- Gestational Diabetes - What is it? How do we treat it?
- Starting Insulin Injections
- After Baby is Born

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