

# HEALTHY EATING TIPS FOR PREDIABETES AND TO LOWER TYPE 2 RISK

## Foods and drink you can and can't have

There are no foods you can't eat. It's a question of making different choices more often. Pick one or two tips to help you make-long-term changes.

### Choose drinks without added sugar

Swap sugary drinks such as cola or lemonade for diet or no added sugar versions. Even better drink **water**. If you normally have tea or coffee with sugar, have it without or try it with a low or no calorie **sweetener**. Try to avoid or limit fruit juices or smoothies to one small glass (150ml) a day as they contain the type of sugar we need to cut down on. Eat the veg or fruit instead to get your 5-a-day.

### Choose higher fibre carbs

As a general guide, go for '**brown**' rather than '**white**' carbs. Brown rice, wholemeal pasta, wholemeal bread and chapatis made with wholemeal flour are healthier options.

### Cut down on red and processed meat

Get your protein instead from **lean white** meat such as chicken or turkey, eggs, fish – (fresh, frozen or tinned), pulses like beans, chickpeas and lentils (tinned or cooked from scratch). For a snack or topping or ingredient have **unsalted nuts**. **Tofu** and **tempeh** are also protein rich.

### Eat plenty of fruit and veg

Aim for at least 5-a-day, for example, two portions of fruit and three portions of veg: Example: an **apple**, a handful of **grapes**, and three heaped tablespoons each of cooked **broccoli** and **carrots** and a small bowl of **rocket** or **kale**. Frozen, tinned and dried fruit and veg all count.

## Choose unsweetened yoghurt, and cheese

Aim for 3 portions of dairy a day, such as a small pot of plain natural or Greek yoghurt, a portion of **cheese** (matchbox size) and a third of a pint of **milk**. If you want to cut calories, pick versions that are diet, or low or half fat, or skimmed versions which have the same nutrients. For plant-based milks like oat or soya, check it's unsweetened and fortified with vitamins and minerals.

## Choose healthier snacks

Instead of automatically reaching for crisps, chips, biscuits, cake, sweets, chocolates, pies, pastries and cake, have a piece of fruit, a handful of **unsalted nuts**, plain **popcorn** or some **yoghurt**. If you tend to snack when you're not hungry, try and distract yourself, for example, listen to a podcast or go for a walk.

## Pick healthier oils or fats

Cook (or bake) with small amounts of healthier oils such as **olive oil**, **sunflower oil** and **rapeseed oil** (can be labelled vegetable oil), rather than coconut and palm oil. For spreading, replace butter with a **margarine** made from the healthier oils mentioned. Grilling, poaching and steaming or air frying (as you often need less oil) can be healthier ways to cook.

## Cut down on salt

Ban the salt cellar. Add flavour with black pepper or experiment with fresh or dried **herbs and spices**. If cooking from scratch

don't add salt even if the recipe asks for it. Takeaways and ready meals have lots of salt. Look for food labels with **low salt**, shown by a green indicator. Too much salt can increase your blood pressure which increases your risk of type 2 diabetes.

## Get vitamins and minerals from food instead of tablets

Most people should get the nutrients they need from a varied and balanced diet unless they're prescribed by a healthcare professional, for example folic acid for planning a pregnancy. An exception is **Vitamin D** in the autumn and winter, advised by the government.

## Be sensible with alcohol

Alcohol contains lots of calories which can lead to weight gain and increases type 2 diabetes risk. If you drink, stay within government guidelines: no more than 14 units a week spread evenly over several days. Have at least 2 to 3 alcohol free days a week. To find out the units in your drink use the unit calculator on Alcohol Change UK's website.

**Have questions or need more advice? Our helpline is here for you.**  
Speak to one of our trained advisors on 0345 123 2399.

Or go to our website:  
[diabetes.org.uk/type-2-prevention](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/type-2-prevention)

Last reviewed January 2026.