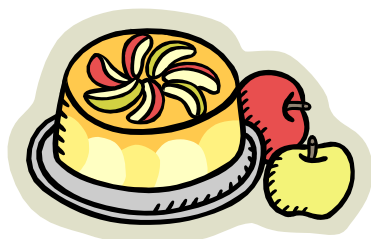


What About Dessert?

In times past people with diabetes were told that they couldn't eat sugar or sweet foods. If this were true, they wouldn't be able to eat fruit or drink milk, since these foods contain naturally occurring sugars. Now we understand that sugar and sweetened foods have the same effect on blood sugar levels as other high-carbohydrate foods (such as starches, milk and fruit) when we compare equivalent amounts of these foods in terms of the carbohydrate they contain. Many dessert recipes can be delicious using fresh fruits and other nutritious ingredients. Artificial sweeteners can be used to add sweetness to desserts while adding few or no calories.

Many sweet foods (such as cakes, cookies and candies) do not contain nutrients that the body needs. Even if you balance your carbohydrate intake using the 50/50 Method, it's not a good idea to eat large amounts of these foods. If you do, it's likely that you'll end up eating fewer portions of grains, fruits and milk on a daily basis. Sugar and sweets can fit into a healthy diet occasionally. However, they should not replace nutrient rich carbohydrate foods like whole grains, fruits, beans and milk.

One solution is to eat fruit for dessert, either alone or incorporated into recipes. While fruit is high in carbohydrate, it also contains vitamins, minerals and fiber. If you choose canned fruit, look for that which is packed in light syrup or fruit juice. These types have less sugar than fruits packed in heavy syrup. If canned fruit in heavy syrup is the only type available,



drain off the syrup and rinse the fruit before eating it.

A second strategy is using sugar substitutes, which lend a sweet taste to foods without adding many calories or grams of carbohydrate. Remember that sugar is more than sweet. In addition to sweetening a recipe, sugar makes baked products tender and moist. It gives a golden brown color to baked desserts and breads. It also gives volume to cakes and cookies. To avoid disappointing results, start by replacing only part of the sugar with artificial sweeteners. Keep in mind that most sugar substitutes are much sweeter than sugar, and therefore be careful to find out a product's sugar equivalency by reading the food label. Recipes that usually do well with sugar substitutes are beverages, frozen desserts, pie fillings, sauces, gelatins and puddings. You can find artificial sweetener recipes on product containers, request them from the company or look for them on Internet websites.

Reading a nutrition label helps with decisions about how much of a sweet food to eat. Remember that 15 grams of carbohydrates is considered 1 serving of a carbohydrate food. If a serving of dessert contains 45 grams of carbohydrates, it counts as 3 carbohydrate servings. Depending on how many servings of carbohydrates you are allotted at a meal, dessert could use up your total carbohydrate "allowance." In this case, you might want to eat less than a serving. Remember that many fruit desserts, as well as those made with artificial sweeteners, still contain high levels of carbohydrate. This is because they also contain other high-carbohydrate ingredients, such as flour and milk.

Go ahead and enjoy an occasional dessert. As with all high-carbohydrate foods, moderation and balance are the keys to fitting the foods you love into your overall diet.