



Meal Planning Methods

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| Diet Type | Principles | Advantages | Disadvantages | Target Population |
|-----------------------|--|--|---|---|
| Carb Counting | <p>Patients learn carbohydrate content (in grams) of food types/amounts</p> <p>If patients are taking a constant medication dose or are diet-controlled, they should eat a consistent amount of carbohydrate at every meal</p> <p>If patients are taking rapid-acting medications (secretagogue or insulin), they should dose medication according to amount of carbohydrate eaten</p> | <p>Can eat specified portion size of any food at specified meal times</p> <p>Can eat any amount of food at any time</p> | <p>Need to consult references to learn to accurately measure or estimate portion size</p> <p>Not necessarily nutritionally balanced</p> | <p>Patients willing to purchase reference materials and learn to measure or estimate portions</p> |
| Exchanges | <p>Foods are grouped into categories: carbohydrate-containing foods are divided into 15-gram portions (exchanges)</p> <p>Patients are either given a number of “carbohydrate exchanges” to eat or</p> <p>They adjust medications to “cover” exchanges eaten</p> | <p>Method of choice for many years so often referenced in recipes and teaching materials</p> <p>Meals are nutritionally balanced</p> | <p>Not all foods on lists</p> <p>No flexibility in serving sizes or types of foods eaten</p> <p>May be impractical and expensive</p> | <p>Patients who have had diabetes for a long time and have been taught according to this system and do not want to learn a new method</p> <p>Patients who want to use educational materials following this system</p> |
| 50/50 Plate Method | <p>Suggests filling 1/2 plate with foods that raise blood sugar (carbs) and 1/2 plate with foods that do not (protein, fat, non-starchy vegetables)</p> | <p>Easy to visualize and teach</p> <p>Teaches portion control</p> | <p>Not necessarily nutritionally balanced</p> | <p>New diabetics at first lesson</p> <p>Groups with low literacy, language barrier, lack of interest in learning more complicated methods</p> |
| Balanced Plate Method | <p>1/4 plate contains grains or other starches (rice, pasta, potatoes, corn, peas)</p> <p>1/4 plate contains protein foods (meat, fish, poultry, eggs, tofu, nuts)</p> <p>1/2 plate contains non-starch vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, carrots, salad)</p> <p>Add glass of non-fat milk and small bread, fruit</p> | <p>Nutritionally balanced</p> <p>Easy to visualize and teach</p> <p>Teaches portion control</p> | <p>May be impractical, inflexible, expensive</p> | <p>Groups with low literacy, language barrier</p> <p>Patients who want exact directives</p> <p>Patients trying to lose weight</p> |