

Take Charge of Your Diabetes // Bonus Holiday Recipe



It's never too late to take charge of your life!

Diabetes is a complex disease that requires daily self-management, making healthy food choices, staying physically active, monitoring blood sugar and taking medications as prescribed by your doctor.

Over 8 percent of the American population has diabetes. In over 65 populations, 25 percent have diabetes.

Our bodies need daily nutrients. We consume carbohydrates for energy, proteins for strength, and fats are also needed for nerves and body functions. How much we consume of each is critical to understand. Carbohydrates are broken down into glucose during digestion. Carbohydrates are the main ingredient that raises blood glucose.

As you take control of your diet, you will need to understand portion size, the ingredients in products, and watch for added

ingredients. Fiber is also an important component for diabetics. Fiber can help control blood sugar levels by slowing down sugar absorption.

Fiber makes you feel “fuller” and helps move foods through the digestive tract. With bright colors and flavorful textures, vegetables are an excellent way to add fiber, vitamins and minerals to your daily plan. Fill your plate half full with vegetables at meal time. Aim for 30 grams of fiber every day. Adding apples, pears, bran, and vegetables to your everyday diets will increase the fiber and help in maintaining sugar levels.

Finding out that you have diabetes can be discouraging and frustrating. It is a serious disease with many possible complications. However, **research has shown that people with diabetes can live long and healthy lives.** The way to do this is by managing glucose levels with diet, exercise and proper medications.

For those with diabetes, it is critical to find ways to eat foods with lower sugars, salts and fats. These three items greatly flavor most of our foods and when we minimize them, we must make some modifications, finding new ways to flavor foods.

Learning to use herbs, spices, sugar substitutes, low fat and low-sodium products will make a difference in your blood sugar levels.

Diabetes is an ongoing epidemic, and shouldn't go unchecked. Keep it monitored and under control. You may enjoy this favorite recipe for the upcoming holidays.

Sweet Potato Casserole

4 sweet potatoes (about 2 pounds), peeled and cut into slices or chunks

1/3 cup sugar free pancake syrup

1 tbsp grated fresh ginger

3 tbsp low fat butter or butter substitute, cut in small pieces

Cook potatoes in lightly salted boiling water for 8 minutes until almost tender. Drain well.

Heat syrup and ginger in a small sauce pan. Cook 3 minutes on low for flavors to blend; set aside.

In prepared pan, arrange potatoes in a single layer. Pour syrup mixture over potatoes. Dot with butter. Cover and bake 35 minutes at 350 degrees.

This article was written by Carolyn Washburn, Extension Professor, Washington County