

Basic feeding for the diabetic

Healthy eating is the most important tool you have in managing diabetes.

Healthy eating will help you lose weight or maintain healthy weight that can improve your blood glucose and reduce the complications of diabetes such as heart, kidney and eye diseases.

Your food choices matter a lot if you suffer from diabetes. Some food sources are better than others in providing sugars yet some can wreck or help you have a balanced level of sugar.

According to Dr. William Lumu a diabetologist at Mengo Hospital, a person becomes diabetic if his or her level of blood sugar is higher than normal.

"Blood sugar that arises from the food we eat is controlled by insulin, a digestive juice that is secreted by the pancreas. Insulin controls the level of blood sugar and one becomes diabetic when there is either no production of insulin or the insulin produced is not able to control their blood sugar," he says.

A diabetes diet can be recommended by a diabetologist and this healthy-eating plan is naturally rich in nutrients and low in fat and calories. Key elements are fruits, vegetables and whole grains. It should be low in cholesterol, low in salt and low in added sugar.

Dr Lumu, "Your body needs proteins and for people with diabetes, plant-based proteins, such as beans and nuts are more recommendable. Fish and seafood, chicken and other poultry (choose the breast meat if possible); eggs and low-fat dairy in regulated amounts are

recommendable."

Focus on eating lean protein, high-fiber, less processed carbs, fruits, and vegetables, low-fat dairy, and healthy vegetable-based fats such as avocado and nuts. Plant-based protein from beans, nuts will get nutrients and fiber that are not in animal products.

Vegetables

Fresh vegetables, lightly steamed, roasted, grilled or eaten raw are a good choice to get fiber and very little fat. "Go for a variety of coloured vegetables ranging from dark greens, red or orange such as carrots or red peppers, whites (onions) and even purple (eggplants). Steamed greens such as kale, cabbage, spinach with low sodium or unsalted are perfect," he says.

Fruits

Fruits provide carbohydrates, vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Most are naturally low in fat and sodium. But they tend to have more carbohydrates than vegetables. Best choices include fresh fruits, sugar-free or low-sugar jam, whole grains, such as brown rice, oatmeal, quinoa, millet, or amaranth, foods made with whole grains and no (or very little) added sugar.

The worst foods

It is important that you choose high-fiber, slow-release carbohydrates. This is because carbohydrates have a big impact on your blood sugar levels. Limit refined carbohydrates like white bread, pasta, and rice, as well as soda, candy, packaged meals, and snack foods.

