Making Choices about Food

Why learn about making choices?
- Knowing how to make food choices can help you control your diabetes, rather than letting your diabetes control you.
- Knowing how to fit fast food and snack foods into your food plan can give you more freedom.
- You will have more energy, fewer problems with high and low blood glucose, and fewer long-term problems.

Get better diabetes control
- Try out different foods at different times and check your blood glucose level.
- Think ahead and plan how to manage parties, sports practices and events, snacks, and fast food.
- Learn to make tradeoffs - for example, eat a low-fat breakfast and lunch so you can eat fast food in the evening without having too many calories.
- Be honest and assertive with friends.

Make your food plan work
- Try to eat meals and snacks at the same time each day. Your dietitian can help you develop a meal plan.
- Learn how to substitute sweet foods for other foods in your meal plan. Try to have sweet foods with a meal, not by themselves.
- Get nutrition information from your favorite fast-food restaurants - often available on-line. Use the grams of carbohydrate, calories, and/or exchanges to work out how fast foods can fit into your food plan.
- Find out how you can use more insulin or exercise when you eat more than usual.
- Set an alarm on your watch if you think you may forget to eat a meal or snack or take an insulin dose.

What are your options?
If you want to eat more food than usual at a meal or snack, eat at an unusual time, or eat something sweet:
- Choose a free food (such as a sugar-free Popsicle) or a food that is mostly protein (such as a boiled egg).
- Find out how to switch sweet foods or snack foods for other foods in your meal plan.
- Exercise after eating food with extra carbohydrate to use up some of the glucose. Check your blood glucose after you exercise to see if this works for you.
- Ask your health care team if you can use extra insulin.

If you want to exercise or be more active than usual:
- Eat a snack with about 15 grams of carbohydrates before or after you exercise.
- Check your blood glucose before and after exercise to find out how exercise and extra snacks affect you.
- Ask your health care team if you can use less insulin when you exercise a lot.

To make sure you don't gain weight:
- Choose low-fat foods to avoid extra calories.
- Order hamburgers and sandwiches without cheese, bacon, mayonnaise, or special sauces.
- Munch on fat-free chips, pretzels, or low-fat microwave popcorn.
- Choose Mexican foods made with plain tortillas (not fried) and topped with salsa.
- Take the skin off fried chicken and choose corn on the cob and mashed potatoes on the side.
- Order pizza with vegetable toppings.

Problem-solving basics
- Look at the situation.
- Think about your options: change in food plan, change in exercise plan, and change in insulin schedule
- Monitor the results.
- Decide if next time you would do the same thing or something different.

Here's how it works
The situation: You're going with friends to get fast food after school or work. Your usual afternoon snack is 1/2 sandwich and a piece of fruit.
Options
- Choose a similar snack, such as fries OR a small hamburger and diet soda.
- Eat more, such as a large hamburger and fries, AND get extra exercise.
- Eat more than usual AND take extra insulin.
- Try to get your friends to do something else or go for dinner instead.
- Just overeat.

What You Need to Know
- Which fast foods have the same amount of carbohydrate as your usual snack.
- How much exercise you will need for the extra food and whether you will do it.
- How much extra insulin you would need for the extra food.
- How your choices will affect the rest of the day.
- Whether your friends will listen to what you want to do.
- The consequences if you overeat.

Monitoring: Check your blood glucose two hours later to see if it is in your target range.

Did your choice work? If not, what could you try next time?