

How to be a savvy supermarket shopper

Some people love grocery shopping, others think it is a real chore. It can certainly be what helps you manage your diabetes – if you buy the right foods.

Take time to understand what you should be buying – and what you need to avoid – to help keep your blood sugars stable.

It's important to check the nutritional details as a product described as low fat, can actually have the highest sodium and lowest fibre content. Likewise, something that is low fat can also be high in sugar. Even products with a Healthy Star rating need to be carefully considered.

Here's a virtual supermarket tour guide to help you shop well and live well.

TIPS

4 tips when going grocery shopping

- 1 Don't go shopping when you're hungry** - it makes you impulsive, and you tend to buy treats you don't need
- 2 Shop around the periphery of the supermarket** - targeting produce and quality proteins
- 3 Go with most of your meals planned and a shopping list** - it saves you time and money
- 4 Consider shopping online** - it means you buy what you need, and are not tempted by things you don't.



Around the periphery of the supermarket

Fresh Produce Department

This should be a core part of your shopping trolley. Make sure that you choose a variety of fruit and vegetables as they provide important antioxidants, minerals, and vitamins. Plan your meals so you are having at least five handfuls of vegetables per day and two pieces of different fruit.

Dark, leafy, green vegetables such as spinach or silverbeet are full of magnesium iron and potassium. Add to this a rainbow of colour such as carrots, broccoli and capsicums, for more nutrients, antioxidants and fibre.

Starchy vegetables such as kumara, taro and pumpkin should make up only a quarter of your meal – and remember to ensure that your portion is about the size of the palm of your hand. Keep the skins on, just give them a good scrub, as they contain a lot of fibre.

Fruit is also great for fibre, antioxidants and vitamin C. Ensure you have two pieces of different fruit daily – apples, pears, bananas, citrus – as they each have slightly different nutritional qualities.

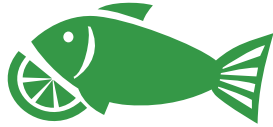
Lemons also contain vitamin C – squeeze the juice over vegetables to help the uptake of iron from leafy greens plus it adds flavour. Lemon juice and sesame seed oil or olive oil, makes a nice salad dressing.

Onions, garlic and ginger are all wonderful additions to your meals, they really add a lot of flavour without all the additives, salts and sugars from sauces.



Fresh Fish

Aim to eat fish at least twice a week – especially salmon or tuna as they are rich in omega 3s and that is so important for a healthy heart, and also a healthy brain. Tinned fish such as tuna, sardines or salmon is also great – look for varieties in spring water or flavours lower in salt with salt less than 300mg per 100g. And try to avoid crumbed or battered fish.



Butchery

Animal protein contain many good vitamins and minerals for healthy growth and recovery, however portion size is important. Aim for quarter of your plate or a similar size as the palm of your hand. Variety of proteins is important from chicken to lamb to pork, but choose leaner cuts or skinless chicken, and unmarinated or not crumbed. Keep red meat to just twice per week.



Dairy

Milk

Milk can be a great source of calcium however it does also contain a sugar called lactose, and, when drunk in large amounts, can also raise your blood sugar levels. Choose lower fat – light blue, green top, yellow top and calci-extra options.



Yoghurt

Yoghurt can be a fantastic addition to your diet, as it contains protein and live probiotic cultures to keep your digestive tract healthy. Look at the nutrition label and choose products with under 10 grams of fat per 100 grams, and under 10 grams of sugar per 100 grams. Look at the ingredients list – it lists it from the bulk of the product to the least amount so if you see sugar listed second, you know that the second highest ingredient is sugar! Generally avoid fruit flavoured yoghurts for this reason. Choose a plain unsweetened yoghurt and add your own fresh fruit or spices.



Cheese

Cheese can be high in fat and salt – so look for lower fat options such as cottage cheese, Edam, feta cheese or use full flavour varieties such as parmesan or cheddar, in smaller quantities.



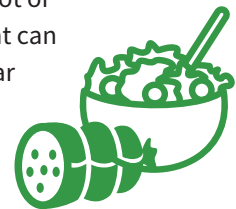
Hummus

Hummus is a flavourful addition to sandwiches or wraps, instead of butter.

Deli Section

A great section to find quick and convenient salads and protein. However, choose lower fat proteins such as ham instead of salamis or other high-fat meats. Cold meats can be high in sodium so limit these to a couple of times a week. Pick low fat ham, roast beef or shredded chicken.

The salad section can be a hidden hurdle - choose salads that have the largest proportion of vegetables and the least dressing to them, such as Greek salad, or the healthy-options coleslaw. Pasta salad or potato salad for example, tend to have a lot of mayonnaise or other dressings that can increase your overall calories, sugar and fat content.



Bread Department

Bread and wraps contain carbohydrates, so limit how much you eat in a sitting. Look for high-fibre options as they keep you fuller for longer and have a slow release of blood sugar into the bloodstream. Choose bread that's above 4 grams of fibre, with wholegrain such as soy and linseed, bran etc.

Avoid flavoured pita breads and wraps – such as garlic butter varieties – as they can contain more calories and fat. White bagels are really quite high in carbohydrates and are more refined – like white bread so they can spike your blood sugar levels too.





Down the aisles

Tinned Foods

To boost your vegetable, protein and fibre content, tinned produce is a good go-to when you don't have fresh supplies. Ensure the sodium and sugar levels are low. Check the labels.



Sauces

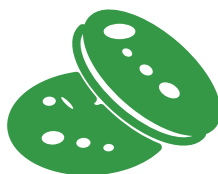
Avoid anything with sugar in it. And if you have any heart or blood pressure issues go for things that have reduced salt – so whether it is tomato sauce, soy sauce, or any stocks, choose the reduced salt versions, and no sugar.



Crackers & Biscuits

Choose varieties with wholegrains such as soy and linseed or multigrain – aiming for ones with more than 5 grams of fibre per 100 grams, as that will keep you fuller for longer and your blood sugar levels stable. Unflavoured options are usually lower in salt.

Just down from the cracker section is the biscuits. These should not be a daily staple, more an occasional treat. If you cannot avoid them completely, try to go for the lower sugar option and avoid those with flavoured icing, cream centres or chocolate dipped. Instead go for biscuits with under 10g of sugar per 100g.



Rice

Choose the low glycaemic versions – brown rice, basmati rice, jasmine or long grain rice. Through digestion you will have a slower release of blood sugar levels into your blood stream. When it comes to portion sizes, it is really important to keep to what would fit in the palm of your hand.



Cereals

Plain cereals are always best – a flavoured porridge has a much higher sugar content than a plain one. Check the ingredients list and avoid cereals where sugar is listed first or second, and pick cereals with under 10g per 100g for sugar. A high fibre cereal is also beneficial to manage blood sugar levels so choose one over 4-5g of fibre per serve.



Snack Bars

If you need a snack sometimes keeping it simple is best with plain nuts, fruit, vegies, boiled eggs, wholegrain crackers and hummus all good options.

But when you need an emergency snack in your work drawer, choose low sugar. Ideally buy snack bars with under 10g per 100g. Go easy on snack balls made with dates.



With thanks to Kate Walker, from Life Spark Nutrition

Diabetes New Zealand is a leading national organisation and registered charity. Our aim is to support all people affected by diabetes to live well through: Providing information and support to help people take charge of their health • Acting as an advocate and representing all people with, or at risk of developing, diabetes • Raising awareness of diabetes, especially around lifestyle factors that can help prevent or delay type 2 and help manage and control type 1 and type 2.