

It's all about the portions

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By A.K. Whitney Food Editor

Being diabetic used to mean avoiding sugary foods. Goodbye cookies, goodbye candy. Goodbye ice cream and birthday cake.

But times -- and health officials' minds -- have changed.

"If you have diabetes, you can eat everything," says Linda Basile, a registered nurse and diabetes educator at Community Hospital of Long Beach. "BUT check the portion size."

It's the dietary equivalent of the real estate mantra -- but instead of location, location, location, it's portions, portions, portions.

People with diabetes have to keep control over their blood sugar levels, since they either don't produce or are resistant to insulin. Insulin, which is made by the pancreas, helps cells use sugar in the blood and turn it into needed energy (for more information about the medical aspects of diabetes, see Monday U's health story on www.presstelegram.com). If there's not enough insulin or the cells are unable to use the insulin, the level of sugar in the blood can hit an unhealthy high, leading to anything from blindness to coma to death. In other words, this is one sugar rush you don't want.

But a little sugar is OK. The question, however, is how much is that? That's when it gets tricky.

Usually, people who are diagnosed with diabetes are encouraged by their doctor to meet with a dietitian and discuss meal planning.

During these sessions, they are taught about portion control and given an idea of how many calories they actually need a day (most of us tend to have trouble not eating more food than we need anyway), and what foods should make up those calories to keep blood sugar at healthy levels.

In addition, Long Beach hospitals, including Community and St. Mary Medical Center, offer diabetes information classes which feature a comprehensive look at nutrition.

There are, however, some ways around the "I want more sugar than I should have" conundrum. Artificial sweeteners, including sucralose (Splenda), aspartame (Equal) and saccharin (Sweet 'N Low) don't raise blood sugar levels, and are recommended by the American Diabetes Association as an alternative.

Don't respond well, or dislike the taste of the alternatives? A number of cookbooks out there are designed with diabetics in mind, and include nutrition information. A few more recent ones include "Diabetes Comfort Food," by Joanna Burkhard, and "Light and Easy Diabetic Cuisine" and "The Diabetes Double-Quick Cookbook," by Betty Marks.

Burkhard firmly believes in portion control, since her recipes contain few sugar substitutes and are as close to non-diabetic recipes as you can get. Marks is more apt to go for substitutes, but has plenty of recipes that don't require them. Her books are designed with the busy cook in mind, and her latter title is geared toward microwave cooking.

The American Diabetes Association also offers tips on nutrition, recipes and suggestions for meal planning.

The recipes that follow come from these cookbooks.

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Want to know more about diabetes and meal planning? Local hospitals can help.

DIABETES 101

What: A four-week class on diabetes and how to live with it. The course covers medical issues as well as fitness, nutrition and everyday coping.

Where: Community Hospital of Long Beach, 1720 Termino Ave., Long Beach

When: 2 and 5:30 p.m. Wednesdays; next session starts Jan. 10. Those interested must call for an assessment beforehand.

Information: (562) 494-0764

DIABETES EDUCATION CLASS

What: A four-week class on diabetes and how to live with it. The course covers medical issues as well as fitness, nutrition and everyday coping.

Where: St. Mary Medical Center, 1050 Linden Ave., Long Beach

When: 8 a.m. Thursdays; next session begins Jan. 4. Participants also get a one-on-one session with a diabetes educator.

Information: (888) 478-6279; those interested must be referred by a physician and have authorization from insurance.

For more information on diabetes, contact the American Diabetes Association at www.diabetes.org

LEMON FOOL

2 tablespoons cornstarch

1/2 cup cold water

2/3 cup granulated sugar

1 tablespoon grated lemon zest

1/3 cup freshly squeezed lemon juice

2 egg yolks

1 cup plain low-fat yogurt

1/2 cup whipping cream

4 cups fresh berries, such as sliced strawberries, raspberries or blueberries

Additional berries, fresh mint sprigs and zest

In a small saucepan, combine cornstarch with water; whisk until smooth. Add sugar, lemon zest, juice and egg yolks; cook over medium heat, whisking constantly, until mixture comes to a full boil; cook for 15 seconds. Remove from heat and pour into a large bowl. Let cool slightly. Cover surface with plastic wrap; refrigerate for 2 hours or until chilled. Whisk lemon mixture until smooth. Whisk in yogurt.

In bowl, using electric mixer, beat cream until stiff peaks form. Gently fold into lemon-yogurt mixture.

Arrange half the berries in six parfait or large wine glasses. Top with half the lemon fool; layer with remaining berries and lemon fool. To serve, garnish with whole berries, mint sprigs and grated lemon zest.

Serves 8

--From ``Diabetes Comfort Food."

Nutritional Analysis Per Serving

Calories 186

Carbohydrates 29 g Fiber 2 g

Protein 3 g

Fat, total 7 g

Fat, saturated 4 g

Sodium 30 mg

Cholesterol 68 mg

CLASSIC CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

3/4 cup butter, softened

3/4 cup granulated sugar

1/2 cup packed brown sugar

2 eggs

2 teaspoons vanilla

1 3/4 cups all-purpose flour

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 1/2 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper.

In a large bowl, using an electric mixer, cream butter with granulated and brown sugars until fluffy; beat in eggs and vanilla until smooth.

In another bowl, stir together flour, baking soda and salt. Beat into creamed mixture until combined; stir in chocolate chips.

Drop by tablespoonfuls about 2 inches apart onto cookie sheets.

Bake one sheet at time on middle rack in preheated oven for 10 to 12 minutes or until edges are firm. Cool for 2 minutes on baking sheets; remove to wire rack and cool completely.

Makes 40 cookies

--From ``Diabetes Comfort Food.''

Nutritional Analysis Per Serving

Calories 110

Carbohydrates 15 g

Fiber 1 g

Protein 1 g

Fat, total 6 g

Fat, saturated 3 g

Sodium 85 mg

Cholesterol 19 mg

BANANA-SWEET POTATO PUDDING

1/2 pound sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed 1/4 cup water

2 medium bananas, sliced

1 cup non-fat milk mixed with 2 tablespoons non-fat dry milk powder

1/2 teaspoon coconut extract

1 small cinnamon stick

1 tablespoon frozen orange juice concentrate

1/2 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

2 tablespoons slivered almonds

Boil the sweet potatoes in water for 20 minutes or until tender. Drain off any excess water and add bananas, milk, coconut extract, cinnamon stick and orange juice concentrate. Cook about 15 minutes or until thick. Remove cinnamonstick and add vanilla. Puree in blender or food processor and serve either warm or chilled, topped with slivered almonds.

Serves 6.

--From ``Light & Easy Diabetes Cuisine."

Nutritional Analysis Per Serving

Calories 102

Carbohydrates 19 g

Protein 3 g

Fat, total 1.8 g

Sodium 32 mg

Cholesterol 19 mg

RICE PUDDING

1 cup cooked brown rice

1 large banana, mashed

1/2 cup non-fat dry milk dissolved in 1 cup water

1 teaspoon sesame seeds

1 1/2 teaspoons maple extract

1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Dash ground nutmeg 1/4 cup frozen orange juice concentrate

1 tablespoon raisins

2 egg whites, beaten until stiff

1 tablespoon sunflower seeds

Mix together all ingredients except last two. Fold egg whites into rice mixture, and turn into 4 x 8-inch loaf pan. Top with sunflower seeds. Place pan on inverted saucer, and microwave on High for 5 to 7 minutes, until set. Serve warm or chilled.

Serves 6

--From ``The Diabetes Double-Quick Cookbook." Nutritional
Analysis Per Serving

Calories 121

Carbohydrates 23 g

Fiber 1.6 g

Protein 5 g

Fat, total 1 g

Cholesterol 1 mg

BLUEBERRY CORNMEAL MUFFINS

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour

1/3 cup cornmeal

1/2 cup granulated sugar

2 1/2 teaspoons baking powder

1/4 teaspoon salt

1 egg

3/4 cup low-fat milk

1/4 cup butter, melted

1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Line muffin pan with paper liners.

In a bowl, stir together flour, cornmeal, sugar, baking powder and salt.

In another bowl, beat egg. Stir in milk, melted butter and lemon zest. Combine with dry ingredients until just mixed. Gently fold in blueberries.

Spoon into prepared muffin cups so they are three-quarters full.

Bake for 20 to 24 minutes or until top is firm to the touch and lightly browned. Remove from pans and let muffins cool on rack.

Makes 12 Muffins

--From ``Diabetes Comfort Food."

Nutritional Analysis Per Serving

Calories 157

Carbohydrates 26 g

Fiber 1 g

Protein 3 g

Fat, total 5 g

Fat, saturated 3 g

Sodium 155 mg

Cholesterol 26 mg

ORANGE CHEESE CAKE

1 cup part-skim ricotta cheese

1/4 cup 1 percent cottage cheese

2 eggs, 1 yolk only

1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract 1 teaspoon maple extract

Pinch nutmeg

1 tablespoon whole wheat pastry flour

2 tablespoons frozen orange juice concentrate

3 tablespoons orange peel, grated

4 tablespoons Grapenuts

4 sliced strawberries, blueberries, kiwi or banana for topping if desired

In a deep bowl, combine first nine ingredients, reserving 1 tablespoon of orange peel. Beat with a hand mixer or use food processor to blend quickly. Turn into a 9 inch quiche or pie dish, and microwave at 80 percent power for 8 minutes, rotating the dish once. Microwave on High for 2 minutes more. Cake is baked when a knife inserted in center comes out clean.

Dust top with Grapenuts and reserve orange peel. Refrigerate for a few hours, or make this the day prior to serving. Before serving, top with sliced fruit or berries. Lemon juice and lemon rind may be substituted for the orange.

Serves 6

--From ``The Diabetes Double-Quick Cookbook."

Nutritional Analysis Per Serving

Calories 101

Carbohydrates 10 g

Fiber .7 g

Protein 8 g

Fat, total 4 g

Cholesterol 57 mg

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