Meal Planning Tips

Carbohydrates

- Carbohydrates cause the biggest increase in your blood glucose (sugar). Because of this, you need to follow the amount of carbohydrates recommended in your meal plan carefully. Carbohydrates are important in a healthy diet and do not need to be avoided, just eaten in the recommended amounts.

- Foods high in carbohydrates include grains (breads, cereals, rice, pasta, etc.); starchy vegetables (potatoes, peas, beans, corn, etc.); fruits; most dairy (milk, yogurt, ice cream, etc., but not cheese); and anything with added sugars such as molasses, honey, agave nectar, corn syrup, etc. See below for additional guidelines.

  - Grains:
    - Choose grains with 3 or more grams of fiber per serving.
    - Select the whole grain variety. For example, select 100% whole grain over the white enriched bread.

  - Starchy Vegetables:
    - Consume cleaned vegetable peels or skin to increase your fiber. Higher fiber can help with blood sugar control and constipation.
    - Limit servings to 1 per meal or the recommendation in your meal plan.

  - Fruits:
    - Choose small, fresh pieces of fruit instead of juice or dried fruits. Fruit juice and dried fruits should not be frequent choices.
    - Eat 2 to 3 servings per day (½ cup sliced fruit or 1 small piece of fresh fruit).
    - Many fruits contain similar vitamins and minerals as non-starchy vegetables and are important during pregnancy.

  - Dairy:
    - Consume 4 servings per day of low-fat or fat-free dairy.
    - If you choose not to consume dairy or do not tolerate it well, talk with your dietitian about other options for consuming enough calcium and vitamin D.

  - Sweets/Added Sugars:
    - There is no nutritional need for added sugars during pregnancy.
    - Sweets may increase blood sugar faster and more than other carbohydrates. It is best to significantly limit how many sugary
foods or drinks you consume during pregnancy.

- Having approximately the same amount of carbohydrates for each meal every day is important for predicting your blood sugar’s reaction to food.

Non-Starchy Vegetables
- Non-starchy vegetables contain some carbohydrates but are much lower per serving than the foods listed under “Carbohydrates.”
- They are usually good sources of fiber and have many vitamins and minerals needed in pregnancy.
- Eat at least 3 to 5 servings of non-starchy vegetables every day, remembering that brightly colored vegetables have the best nutrition. Think about meal options such as stir-fried veggies (cauliflower, mushrooms, carrots), salad (spinach, kale, tomatoes), steamed or grilled veggies (broccoli, squash) and vegetable soups.
- One serving is ½ cup of cooked vegetables or 1 cup of raw vegetables.

Protein
- Foods high in protein include meat, eggs, milk, cheese and beans.
- These foods are a good source of iron and B vitamins, all important in pregnancy.
- Good choices of lean protein are “loin” cuts (sirloin, tenderloin), “round” cuts, fish, eggs, beans, low-fat cheese and tofu.
- During pregnancy, it is encouraged that you eat 5 to 8 oz. of lean, high-quality protein per day. Your recommended amount may be higher than this. Ask your Registered Dietitian (RD) for a personalized plan.

Fats
- Fat alone doesn’t tend to increase blood glucose, but fat added to carbohydrates can make blood glucose stay at its peak much longer. High-fat foods that are also high in carbohydrates can include pizza, lasagna, chips and dip, and fried foods (such as General Tso’s chicken, country fried steak and chimichangas).
- There are 4 main types of fats found in foods:
  - Monounsaturated: nuts, canola and olive oil
  - Polyunsaturated: walnuts, corn and safflower oil
  - Saturated: butter, red meat, desserts, fried foods
  - Trans: margarine and many commercially prepared baked sweets

Most Americans eat too much saturated and trans fats. Especially during pregnancy, you should decrease the amount of these fats in your diet.