

# healthy hints for modifying recipes

**Being diagnosed with diabetes doesn't mean you can't continue to enjoy food. By making a few changes to your recipes, you can make them healthier and in line with what is recommended for all Australians who are interested in healthy eating.**

## General guidelines

Use ingredients and recipes that:

- > Are lower in fat, particularly saturated fat
- > Are based on breads, cereals, rice, pasta, noodles (preferably wholegrain), vegetables (including legumes) and fruits
- > Contain only a moderate amount of added sugar
- > Contain lower salt ingredients (use salt sparingly).

To help you follow these guidelines, try some of the hints below. Also refer to the *Food Choices for People with Diabetes* and *Reading Food Labels* information sheets.

## Fats and oils

### Butter, margarine, oil and dressings

- In cooking, use small amounts of polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats such as olive, canola and sunflower oils instead of butter.
- Use low fat cooking methods such as steaming, stir-frying, grilling or microwaving.
- When baking or using a non-stick pan, try using a cooking spray oil.
- When frying or sautéing, use small amounts of polyunsaturated or monounsaturated fats.
- As an alternative to butter, try spreading bread with a thin layer of avocado, ricotta cheese, cottage cheese, hommos or low fat mayonnaise.
- On salads, try using an oil-free dressing or make your own dressing using olive oil mixed with balsamic vinegar or lemon juice.

**Use low fat ingredients and low fat cooking methods. Replace butter with healthier alternatives and instead of salt, experiment with the delicious flavours of herbs, spices and vinegars.**



# modifying recipes

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## **Cream**

- Try low fat yoghurt or Frûche Light® instead of cream.
- For desserts, use a mixture of reduced fat ricotta cheese and natural low fat yoghurt. For flavour add lemon, strawberry or vanilla essence, or add fresh fruit/pulp, cocoa or coffee.
- Try evaporated skim milk that is chilled and whipped.
- For savoury creamy sauces, use low fat evaporated milk, buttermilk, low fat natural yoghurt or skim milk thickened with cornflour. Add seasonings to flavour.

## **Sour cream**

- Try extra light sour cream, low fat yoghurt, buttermilk or reduced fat ricotta cheese as an alternative.

## **Coconut milk**

- Use a fat reduced coconut milk.
- Try coconut flavoured light evaporated milk.
- Mix together 1 metric cup low fat milk or evaporated skim milk with 2 teaspoons cornstarch, 1 teaspoon coconut essence and a little sugar to taste.
- Try low fat yoghurt mixed with a little coconut essence or desiccated coconut (do not boil).

## **Dairy products & substitutes**

### **Milk**

- Use low fat milk (eg: Shape®, Lite White®, Rev®, PhysiCAL®, Light Start®), fat modified milk (eg: Farmers Best®) or skim milk. UHT milk is good to keep on hand as it has a long shelf life.
- Make a tasty drink with low fat or skim milk by adding plain cocoa and 1 teaspoon of sugar, Ovaltine Light Break® or Jarrah Chocolate®.
- Try using low fat fresh or UHT soy drink eg: So Good Lite®, VitaSoy Lite®, Soy Life® low fat or Soy Natural Lite®.
- Use low fat milk or soy on breakfast cereal, as a drink, in soups, in custard or in cooking.
- Blend fresh fruit such as banana or berries with yoghurt, low fat milk or soy milk for a delicious smoothie.

### **Cheese**

- Try using reduced fat ricotta or low fat cottage cheese.
- Use small amounts of reduced fat block cheeses or use a smaller amount of a stronger flavoured cheese eg: parmesan.
- Sprinkle grated cheese, as you will use less.
- For sandwiches, use the reduced fat sliced cheeses like Bega So Extra Light®, Coon Extra Light® or Jarlsberg Light®.
- For a baked cheese topping, use half the cheese mixed with oats, oatbran, multigrain breadcrumbs or wheatgerm.
- Instead of using cream cheese, try extra light cream cheese or reduced fat ricotta cheese (with a dash of vanilla essence for sweet dishes).

### **Yoghurt, ice cream and custard**

- Use low fat or 'diet' flavoured yoghurts or add fruit to low fat/skim natural yoghurt.
- Try reduced fat frozen desserts like Weis Frutia®.
- Make custard using custard powder and low fat/skim milk or try low fat UHT or fresh low fat custard.
- Choose low fat ice creams such as Peters Light and Creamy®, Cadbury Light® or Weight Watchers Mini Cups®.
- Try a reduced fat soy-based ice confection or yoghurt.

### **Meat, chicken, fish and eggs**

- Choose lean meat/mince and skinless chicken/poultry and trim all visible fat before cooking.
- Use approximately 100g (palm size) of cooked meat or chicken per person for the main meal of the day.
- Limit added fats when cooking meat, chicken and fish by using low fat cooking methods such as grilling, barbecuing and stir-frying. Add flavour by using herbs, spices, tomato based sauces and marinades.
- Cook meat based casseroles in advance, cool and skim fat off with spoon.
- Use lean sandwich meats such as lean ham, sliced roast beef, chicken and turkey breast or leftover roast meats with skin and/or fat removed.
- Try to eat fish (fresh, frozen or canned in springwater) at least twice a week.
- Try baking fish in the oven wrapped in foil. Add lemon juice and herbs like parsley for flavour and to keep moist.
- Boil eggs or if poaching/scrambling eggs, use a non-stick pan. Make scrambled eggs/omelettes with reduced fat milk.
- For gravy, drain juices from pan, cool enough to allow fat to separate and remove fat before thickening.

## Biscuits, cakes & pastries

- When baking cakes or biscuits, use polyunsaturated or monounsaturated margarine instead of butter.
- Look for recipes that are lower in fat.
- Use fat reduced or skim milk in recipes.
- For icing, try using ricotta cheese blended with fruit and add a touch of icing sugar.
- Make fruit based muffins, scones and slices.
- Experiment with fruit puree or egg whites to bind cakes and use less margarine/oil.
- When using flour, try a mixture of wholemeal and white flour or add a little oat bran. You may need to add a little extra liquid to keep the recipe moist.
- When baking, try substituting 1/2 cup of white flour with soy or wholemeal flour.
- If making a biscuit crumb base, use a biscuit that is higher in fibre.
- Use filo pastry and brush with a little egg white, fruit juice or low fat milk instead of oil.
- For a pie base, instead of using pastry, try cooked rice mixed with egg white or mashed potato. Use spray oil to coat the dish to prevent sticking.
- When making pies, make pastry for the top of the pie only.

## Breads, cereals, legumes & nuts

### Breads

- For sandwiches and toast choose multigrain breads, eg: Coles Farmland multigrain, Safeway Homebrand multigrain, Ploughmans® wholegrain loaf, Burgen® Breads or PerforMAX®.
- To add variety, try different types of breads eg: pita bread, Lebanese flat bread, Sori Wraps, grain rolls, baguettes, sourdough, rye bread, crumpets, pumpernickel and fruit loaf. Avoid croissants as they are high in fat.

### Cereals

- Choose Doongara or Basmati white or brown rice.
- Use egg or wheat noodles as an alternative to rice when making stir-fry.
- Include a variety of pastas like spaghetti, macaroni, fettuccini and penne. Try wholemeal varieties. Top with tomato based sauces rather than creamy style sauces.
- Try using couscous as an alternative to rice or pasta.
- Have natural rather than toasted muesli as it is lower in fat.

## Legumes

- Try to add tinned, pre-cooked or dry legumes into more meals. Look for no added salt varieties.
- Add a can of three or four-bean mix to salads or make a bean salad as a side dish.
- Use lentils in casseroles and soups.
- In mince dishes, try substituting half the mince with cooked lentils, kidney beans, soy beans etc.
- For a quick snack, try baked beans on toast.
- As a meat alternative, try making curries based on legumes and vegetables.
- Try using tofu/tempeh in soups and stir-fries or try products made on soy protein eg: soy burgers/patties.

## Nuts

- Choose small amounts of unsalted nuts.
- Try toasting raw nuts or seeds in the oven or in a non-stick pan. This intensifies the flavour.
- Add small amounts of nuts and seeds to salads, stir-frys and sauces or in baked goods such as muffins and cakes.

## Vegetables

- For healthier chips, make your own wedges by cutting potatoes into chunky pieces (leave the skin on), spray with oil and bake in the oven. Add herbs, spices or vinegar for flavour. Otherwise you can buy oven fries/wedges from the supermarket. Look for varieties cooked in healthy fats, eg: McCain Healthy Choice<sup>®</sup>, Superfries Chunky Cut<sup>®</sup> or Seasons Pride Thick Cut Chips<sup>®</sup>.
- When making roast vegetables, try partially cooking in the microwave, then spray with oil and bake until crisp.
- Instead of adding butter or sour cream to cooked vegetables, try a blend of cottage cheese, skim milk and lemon juice, low fat natural yoghurt or reduced fat ricotta cheese.

## Sugar

- Small amounts of sugar can be added to recipes. Look at the overall quantity of sugar in relation to how many serves (eg: 1/2 cup of sugar in a recipe that serves 10 will have very little effect on blood glucose levels).
- When baking cakes or muffins, try using fruit or fruit juice to sweeten.
- Alternative sweeteners can be used instead of sugar.
- Remember that it is generally better to add some types of alternative sweeteners to food after cooking. This is because some sweeteners (eg: saccharin, cyclamate) turn bitter when cooked. Others, such as aspartame, lose sweetness when heated (refer to *the Alternative Sweeteners* information sheet).
- If you need to add a sweetener before cooking, Splenda<sup>®</sup> or Equal Spoonful<sup>®</sup> are the better choices as they don't turn bitter or lose their sweetness when cooked.

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## Salt

- Read labels to compare sodium content per 100g and choose products with the lowest amount or, where possible, with less than 120mg per 100g.
- When shopping, look for products that are 'salt reduced' or have 'no added salt'.
- Avoid putting salt on the table.
- Reduce or omit salt in cooking.
- Sea salt, rock salt, garlic salt, chicken salt, etc are not suitable substitutes for salt.
- Instead of using salt to flavour foods try using spices such as pepper, garlic, chilli, mustard, curry, paprika and cardamom.
- Add herbs like parsley, basil, oregano, chives, rosemary, coriander, mint, sage, thyme, tarragon and marjoram.
- For extra flavour add lemon juice, onions, ginger, shallots, vinegar, wine or salt reduced stock.

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