

P L A N

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How to

**Lose Weight and
Beat Diabetes**

(Even If You Don't Have It)

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DIFFERENT TYPES OF DIABETES

When we talk about diabetes, we're actually talking about a spectrum of diseases that all share the same fundamental problem. Diabetic people have high, unhealthful levels of sugar trapped in their bloodstream. This is true for all three types of diabetes. Type 2 is the most common form of diabetes. That's what I have, and that's what 95 percent of the 26 million diabetics in the United States have. In this book, when I talk about diabetes, I'm talking about type 2. The other two types of diabetes are:

Type 1

A person develops type 1 diabetes when the pancreas loses its ability to produce insulin or makes too little for the body's needs. Without insulin, our bodies cannot metabolize glucose and other compounds of sugar and carbohydrates, which all of us rely on for proper body functioning. This type of diabetes usually occurs at an early age and is often detected by four classic symptoms: frequent and excessive urination, excessive thirst, ravenous hunger and excessive eating, and weight loss (because the body's cells can't utilize the glucose). Type 1 diabetics make up about 5 percent of all diabetics in the United States. Though some adults can develop type 1 diabetes, most often it is a genetic condition diagnosed in children and young adults. It can also be caused by acute injury to the beta cells, which in turn will trigger the body's immune system to attack itself. Though doctors and researchers have long said that there is no cure for type 1 diabetes, there is mounting evidence that if type 1 diabetes is detected in its earliest stages, progression of the disease might be prevented.

Gestational Diabetes

This type of diabetes occurs during pregnancy when a woman's changing hormones can interfere with how the insulin in her body does its job, resulting in high blood sugar. Most of the time, blood sugar will return to normal after childbirth. **Women who have had gestational diabetes are at higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes.**

DIABETES ON THE RISE

In the United States and around the world, cases of diabetes are increasing at a truly alarming rate. We're talking millions, people. The rates of diabetes are expected to *triple* over the next forty years. By 2050, one in three adults could be diabetic. Today,

- 25 million adults and children in the United States have type 2 diabetes. That's roughly 8 percent of the entire population of the United States!
- an estimated 7 million of those diabetics have not been diagnosed. No diagnosis means no treatment.
- approximately 2 million new cases are diagnosed in the United States each year.
- more than 350 million people worldwide are diabetic.

Source: National Institutes of Health

SCARY STATISTIC ON PREDIABETES

One-third of Americans qualify as having prediabetes, yet 90 percent do not know it.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

GLUCOSE IN CELLS: WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

One of three things happens when glucose enters cells.

1. Glucose is used right away by cells as energy to power the various functions of the body and brain.
2. Glucose enters cells but isn't needed immediately for energy. Cells have the ability to put glucose in short-term storage for use a little bit later. This is called glycogen.
3. Glucose enters cells, but there's no immediate use for energy and the short-term supply is also filled to capacity. In this case, cells put glucose in long-term storage. Can you guess what form this long-term storage of glucose takes? Yep, it's FAT.

And that, folks, is one way food becomes fat. We need fat on our bodies—it's a sign that we've got energy sources in reserve. We just don't want too much.

How Do You Know? Tests for Prediabetes and Diabetes

Doctors can use a fasting plasma glucose test (FPG), an oral glucose tolerance test (OGTT), or an A1C test to detect prediabetes or diabetes.

FPG—Fasting Plasma Glucose Test

- This test is a simple, inexpensive one that is used to expose problems with insulin functioning. A noninvasive blood test, it requires that you fast overnight so that you can measure your blood glucose level first thing in the morning before eating.
- Normal FPG is below 100 mg/dl. A person with prediabetes has a fasting blood glucose level between 100 and 125 mg/dl. If the blood glucose level rises to 126 mg/dl or above, a person has diabetes.

OGTT—Oral Glucose Tolerance Test

- You also need to fast overnight for this oral test. However, your blood sugar is checked after fasting and again two hours after you drink a glucose-rich drink.
- Normal blood glucose is below 140 mg/dl two hours after the drink. In prediabetics, the two-hour blood glucose is 140 to 199 mg/dl. If the two-hour blood glucose rises to 200 mg/dl or above, a person has diabetes.

A1C (also referred to as glycated hemoglobin, glycolated hemoglobin, or hemoglobin A1C, or HbA1C tests)

- This is a blood test (done in a lab or at the doctor's office) that shows the average amount of glucose in the blood over the past two to three months. It measures what percentage of your hemoglobin (the protein in your blood cells that carries oxygen) is coated with sugar. The higher your A1C level, the more out of balance your blood sugar.
- An A1C of 5.6 percent or below is normal. In prediabetics, A1C levels range between 5.7 and 6.4 percent. If your A1C is 6.5 percent or above, you have diabetes.

The American Diabetes Association also offers a Diabetes Risk Test (www.diabetes.org/diabetes-basics/prevention/diabetes-risk-test/) to help you determine if you are at increased risk for diabetes or prediabetes. A high score may indicate that you have prediabetes or are at risk for prediabetes.

These tests are available through your doctor and in drugstores. As you begin to accept and then deal with your prediabetes condition or diabetes diagnosis, you will get to know these tests very well.

Sources: American Diabetes Association and the Mayo Clinic

METABOLIC SYNDROME, AKA “INSULIN RESISTANCE SYNDROME”

You’ve probably noticed that many risk factors for diabetes are also risk factors for other serious health problems. High blood pressure and high cholesterol put you at greater risk not only for diabetes but also for heart problems. So does being overweight and physically inactive.

Doctors have given this cluster of risk factors a name: metabolic syndrome. It’s also known as insulin resistance syndrome. We don’t need to fight about the names of these syndromes or why doctors keep making everything so confusing. All you need to remember is that there are two primary indicators for metabolic syndrome:

- Having extra weight around your middle—being an “apple”
- Showing signs of insulin resistance—determined through a blood glucose test, usually a blood glucose over 100 mg/dl

How is metabolic syndrome diagnosed?

- Glucose levels in the blood higher than 100 mg/dl
- A waist circumference of more than
40 inches for men
35 inches for women
- Reduced HDL (good cholesterol) of less than 40 mg/dl for men and less than 50 mg/dl for women
- Raised triglycerides (type of fat found in your blood) greater than 150 mg/dl

If you can say yes to two or three of these signs, you are considered to have metabolic syndrome. This is a way of saying you're at serious risk for diabetes, as well as heart disease and stroke.

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HEALTHY NUMBERS: HOW HIGH IS TOO HIGH?

It's important to know what levels we're shooting for when it comes to blood pressure and cholesterol. Maintaining blood pressure and cholesterol at these healthy levels can lower risk for diabetes and prediabetes, and help you keep your disease under control if you've already been diagnosed.

Healthy levels of cholesterol are:

LDL levels less than 100 mg/dl

HDL levels 60 mg/dl or higher

Triglycerides under 150 mg/dl

A healthy blood pressure reading is 130/80 or lower.

If your levels are higher than this, don't panic. Don't try to wish them away, or pretend they don't exist or don't matter. I've tried that route. I'm here to tell you it doesn't work.

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THE BASICS OF PREDIABETES

Type 2 diabetes doesn't occur in the body overnight. It's a disease that develops over time. Approximately 79 million people in the United States are prediabetic.

Prediabetes is defined as:

Fasting glucose between 100 and 125 mg/dl

Oral glucose tolerance between 140 and 199 mg/dl

A1C between 5.7 and 6.4 percent

Prediabetics will most likely go on to develop diabetes, if the underlying causes—namely the body's growing inability to use insulin—aren't addressed. This can typically take anywhere from one to ten years. It took me almost ten—talk about pushing the envelope.

WHAT MAKES A DIABETIC?

Diabetes is created by the body's inability to use insulin to move glucose—fuel—into our cells. The measurement of diabetes is done by measuring levels of glucose in the bloodstream. Remember, when insulin can't effectively unlock cells to allow glucose to enter, glucose gets trapped in our blood. This is what we mean when we talk about "high blood sugar." Once blood sugar rises to a certain level, we're considered diabetic.

To be diagnosed with diabetes, you must have:

Fasting glucose of 126 mg/dl or higher

A1C of 6.5 percent or higher

Overnight glucose of 200 mg/dl or higher

HOW HIGH IS YOUR RISK? A DIABETES RISK FACTOR QUIZ

Ask yourself the following questions; the more yes answers you give, the higher your risk of developing diabetes.

Are you overweight?

Do you have a parent or sibling with diabetes?

Does one or more of the following ethnic/ racial identities apply to you?

African American

Hispanic

Indian

Native Alaskan

Native American

Pacific Islander

Southeast Asian

Do you have blood pressure above 130/80?

Has your doctor told you that you are prediabetic?

Has your doctor diagnosed you with metabolic disorder (metabolic syndrome)?

Are you over forty years old?

Did you have gestational diabetes during your pregnancy?

Did you give birth to a baby who weighed more than nine pounds at birth?

Are you mostly sedentary and exercise rarely or not at all?

Source: National Institutes of Health
<http://diabetes.niddk.nih.gov/dm/pubs/riskfortype2/>



SYMPTOMS OF DIABETES

Blurry vision

Fatigue

Frequent urination

Infections of bladder, kidney, skin: frequent
and slow to heal

Tingling in fingers and toes

If you have any of these symptoms, get to your doctor. Pronto. If you're overweight or obese, prediabetic, or otherwise at risk for diabetes, then you have a golden opportunity to change your habits to improve your health and avoid the dire consequences of diabetes. My point is, **DO NOT WAIT** until you have symptoms to address issues with your health and lifestyle that might be pushing you in diabetes' direction. If you take control now, you can spare yourself a lot of what I and millions of other diabetics go through.

HOW REGULAR TESTING HELPS

Self-testing with a glucose meter is a must-do for diabetics. It's safe, it's easy (I promise you!), and it gives you the most valuable, in-the-moment information about your blood glucose levels.

- Testing helps you learn how your body responds to different foods. This is especially helpful in the early days after diagnosis when you're just getting into the swing of eating to control your blood sugar. Over time, you'll become more familiar with how you react to different foods. Still, daily testing helps you keep your blood sugar in a healthy range and avoid complications down the road, such as problems with your eyes (blurry vision), kidney disease or deterioration, and damage to your nervous system, as well as all the other problems that we've talked about associated with chronic high blood sugar and insulin resistance.
 - When you want to introduce a new food to your diet, you can test your blood sugar to see how your body responds. Remember, we all react differently to food. It's not enough to know what a food generally does to blood sugar—you need to know how that food reacts in *your* body.
 - You can test before exercise—especially if you're going to be working out hard. Testing before a workout lets you know whether your blood sugar is high enough, or if you need to eat something before you exercise to avoid your blood sugar dropping too low during or after your workout.
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OTHER IMPORTANT MARKERS OF YOUR HEALTH

These are tests and checks that should be performed regularly if you're diabetic:

High blood pressure

Cholesterol

Kidney function test (by analyzing creatinine in urine)

Eye exams

Foot check

Pill medication for type 2 diabetes

Many people who are newly diagnosed with diabetes are prescribed medication that is taken in pill form. There are three main types of pill medication for type 2 diabetes:

- Medication that helps the body create insulin (so the pancreas is not taxed to produce insulin, though this is not used for every patient suffering from type 2 diabetes—see below)
- Medication that makes insulin work better in the body
- Medications that lower blood glucose. These medications work in one of three ways, by:
 - reducing the production of glucose.
 - slowing or blocking the breakdown of foods that are high in sugars that create glucose.
 - enhancing the body's own glucose-regulating ability.

These medications are sometimes prescribed in combination with one another, to target the body's insulin and glucose problem from multiple angles at once.

Insulin for type 2 diabetes

Sometimes type 2 diabetics require insulin to control their diabetes. If changes in their diets and the addition of an exercise program fail to lower their blood sugar levels, then these patients are usually started on one of the oral hypoglycemic medicines, which usually work. However, over time, most drugs begin to lose their effectiveness. When this happens, insulin therapy is recommended to improve insulin secretion and get blood sugar under control. This is not usually the case with newly diagnosed diabetics. These days, there are several methods for delivering insulin to the bloodstream, including syringes, insulin pills, and an insulin pump that delivers a steady dose of insulin constantly through a small catheter. Sometimes insulin and the pill medications discussed above are used together. It's nearly always the case these days that pill medications are the first option for controlling diabetes, and insulin might be used down the road if necessary to lower blood glucose.

THE ALL-TOO-COMMON COMPLICATIONS FROM DIABETES

Left untreated or poorly managed, diabetes eventually leads to life-threatening complications. Research has shown that three out of five diabetics have at least one complication from their disease. This is why it's worth working hard to take care of yourself now and to keep up with it every day. Here are some of the most common complications from diabetes. Scary, right? I'm not gonna let these happen to me, and I don't want them to happen to you, either. Are you with me?

Eye Problems, Including Blindness

- Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness for adults ages twenty to seventy-four, due to high concentrations of glucose that lead to cellular accumulation of sorbitol, causing swelling and damage of tissues linked to complications of eyes and nerves.

Kidney Problems

- Diabetes is also the leading cause of kidney failure, due most often to glycosylation (or glycation), when glucose damages proteins and interferes with kidney functioning and may lead to eventual failure.

Nerve Damage

- As many as two-thirds of diabetics have some form of nerve damage, caused by concentrations of both sorbitol and glycosylation.

Poor Circulation

- Poor circulation is common among diabetics and can lead eventually to amputations of toes, feet, and legs. Elevated glucose increases production of free radicals, associated with poor circulation and higher risk for heart attack and stroke.
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A QUICK OVERVIEW OF HOW TO EAT ON PLAN D

1. **Watch the white sugar.**

White or refined sugar is in everything—from soda to sweets to packaged TV dinners to ketchup to breakfast cereals to candy, cookies, and cakes. Do you crave sweets? That's likely because you're used to getting a slow drip of it in foods you may not even realize contain sugar. Craving sweets is also a classic characteristic for those of us with type 2 diabetes; one of the key things you're going to do on Plan D is get rid of these cravings when you balance your blood sugar. Wouldn't it be nice not to sit around obsessing about sugar?

2. **Watch the starchy carbs.**

This means any carbohydrate that does not contain much fiber—potatoes, bread, pasta, baked goods, more bread, and did I mention the bread? Yeah—you really have to watch the bread! Carbs without fiber are just as bad for your blood sugar as white sugar.

3. **Eat lots of veggies!**

These green, yellow, and red lovelies will make your body happy and help you manage your insulin and your blood sugar (more on how all that works in a bit!).

4. **Add whole grains.**

Don't go for the white bread, crackers, rolls, or bagels. When you want a sandwich or some cereal, discover some of the new grains that are so tasty and good for you and your blood sugar—millet, amaranth, or quinoa. One of my new breakfast favorites is a slice of toasted Ezekiel bread!

5. Eat moderate amounts of lean protein.

That means chicken, pork chops, fish, shellfish, beans, and other legumes (that's a French word you're going to get to know real well). You can occasionally have red meat, but because it's loaded with fat and fat worsens the insulin resistance behind your type 2 diabetes (among other problems), you need to eat red meat in very limited amounts.

6. Eat moderate amounts of fruit.

Yes, fruit is good for you and it's not candy—it's nutritious and contains fiber. But it does have sugar, so we diabetics need to watch the kinds of fruit we eat.

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HOW TO USE THE GI AND GL

Scale is 1 to 100.

100 is glucose.

Low-glycemic foods are 55 or less.

Middle-glycemic foods are 56–69.

High-glycemic foods are 70 and higher.

Choose mostly low and mid-range GI and GL foods.

When you do eat a high GI food, add low GI foods to the meal. The combined effect will be to lower the overall glycemic impact of the meal you're eating.

Factors that affect the glycemic index and glycemic load

Fat

The presence of fat in a cooked or processed food will affect that food's GI value, and also its GL. Fat in food lowers its glycemic values—but that doesn't mean it's more nutritious. So make sure you check any food's saturated fat content!

Fiber

Fiber also lowers the glycemic values of a food. But in this case, it's a good thing! Fiber slows digestion, and therefore causes blood sugar and insulin levels to rise more slowly as well. Foods such as beans and whole grains, which are in the mid-range of the glycemic index and often have higher glycemic loads, are also full of slow-digesting fiber, as well as protein and other nutrients.

Age, or ripeness

The longer a fruit or vegetable sits on the counter or in the fridge, the riper it becomes—and the higher its glycemic index value. That spotty brown banana that cuts like butter into your cereal has a higher GI and GL than the firm, yellow-skinned one you brought home from the store at the beginning of the week.

Cooking times

Grains and pastas have GI and GL values that rise the longer they are cooked. A firm, al dente pasta or a chewy brown rice will register significantly lower glycemic values than a long-cooked batch of noodles or a pot of rice that's cooked practically to mush.

Processing and preparation

The more processed a food is away from its original state, the higher the glycemic values. Nobody's asking you to adopt a totally raw food diet—I don't eat that way, far from it. But fresh and raw foods do have their place on my plate, and it's an important one. Make sure you include plenty of raw and minimally processed foods in your daily diet. When you do this, you give yourself the license to also include smaller and less frequent servings of more heavily processed foods that you like—even a serving of those mashed potatoes now and then!

QUICK REVIEW: GLUCOSE IN THE BODY

During digestion, food turns to glucose in the body. Different foods break down at different speeds. The speed at which foods convert to glucose directly affects how much glucose enters the bloodstream and how quickly. Choosing foods that break down slowly—and avoiding foods that deliver a quick rush of glucose into our bloodstream—is critical to managing blood sugar levels and reversing the insulin resistance that is the cause of our diabetes. If you're prediabetic or overweight, switching to a low-glycemic diet can help you avoid the fat that is created when there's too much glucose and insulin in your system. This will help you lose weight and hopefully avoid diabetes altogether!

WHAT YOU CAN'T DO WITH THE GI AND GL

The glycemic index and glycemic load are great tools for managing your diet when you're working on lowering your blood sugar, improving your body's use of insulin, and losing weight. But the GI and GL can't do it all. You still need to think about your food choices. Here are some big stroke tips.

Choosing fat and proteins

The GI and GL are measurements of carbohydrates only. Carbohydrates are a big and critical part of our dietary picture—they have an immediate and direct effect on blood glucose. And they make up the majority of our daily diet, or close to it. But you need to keep in mind the basics of protein and fat—choose lean and low-fat options, keep

portions controlled and moderate—in order to create a fully balanced diet.

Evaluating restaurant, store-bought, and processed foods

Every food that is included on a list of glycemic values has been tested and ranked for its impact on blood sugar. GI and GL values can vary widely, even among simple, whole foods. This is even more the case with processed foods. One kind of potato chip is not exactly the same as another. A slice of pizza from a place at one end of the block will have a different GI than a slice from the pizza joint at the other end of the block. GI and GL values will differ by brand, by ingredients, and by preparation.

Measuring calories

The glycemic scale tells us nothing about the calories in our food. Low glycemic does not mean low calorie. While it's true that some of the very lowest glycemic foods are also very low in calories—think leafy greens and nonstarchy vegetables like spinach, broccoli, and cabbage—once you move up the scale a bit things change. Take apples and peanuts, for an example, which are both low-glycemic foods. Both have nutritional value and a place in a diabetic or weight-loss eating plan. Which one has a lower glycemic value? Peanuts (GI=14) have less than half the GI value of apples (GI=38). If you went by GI and GL values alone, you might think it was better to eat lots of peanuts and watch your apple intake. The truth is peanuts and peanut butter are nutritious high-protein foods that are very high in calories. Apples, on the other hand, are a high-fiber food that contains natural sugars and are low in calories. If you just used the GI scale, you might think it was okay to eat lots more peanut butter than apples. And you'd sink your diet, quick.

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A Glycemic Ranking of Many Common Foods

BREADS, FLATBREADS, TORTILLAS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Corn bread, 1 slice	110	31
Baguette, 1 slice	95	15
Kaiser roll	73	12
White bread, 1 slice	73	10
Bagel	72	33
Wheat bread, 1 slice	70	8
Pita bread, white	57	10
Pita bread, wheat	56	8
Corn tortilla	52	12
Wheat tortilla	30	8
CEREALS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Corn Chex	83	21
Rice Krispies	82	22
Corn Flakes	81	21
Corn Pops	80	21
Cheerios	74	13
Raisin Bran	74	12
Special K	69	14
Instant oatmeal	65	17
Cooked oatmeal	58	6
All-Bran	42	4
CRACKERS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Rice crackers	78	17
Graham crackers	74	13
Soda crackers	74	12
Melba toasts	70	16
Wheat crackers	67	9
RyKrisp crackers	65	11
BAKED GOODS AND PASTRIES	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Donut, glazed	76	24
Angel food cake	67	19
Croissant	67	17
Pancakes	66	17
Banana muffin	60	16
Bran muffin	60	14
Oatmeal cookie	54	9

Chocolate chip muffin	52	17
Blueberry muffin	50	15
Vanilla cake from box mix, frosted	42	24
Chocolate cake from box mix, frosted	38	20
Pound cake	38	9

GRAINS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Couscous	65	23
White rice	64	23
Brown rice	55	18
Quinoa	53	13
Bulgur	48	12
Barley	25	11

LEGUMES	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Baked beans	48	7
Chickpeas, canned	42	9
Pinto beans	39	12
Lima beans	31	7
Black Beans	30	7
Lentils	29	5
Chickpeas	28	8
Kidney beans	27	7
Soy beans	18	1

PASTA AND NOODLES	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Spaghetti, cooked 20 min.	64	27
Buckwheat noodles	59	25
Spaghetti, cooked 5 min.	38	18

VEGETABLES	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Parsnip	97	12
Potato, baked	85	26
Beets, canned	64	10
Sweet potato	61	17
Corn on the cob	60	20
Potato, boiled	59	14
Peas	48	3
Carrot	47	3
Tomato	38	1

FRUITS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Watermelon	72	4
Pineapple	66	12
Cantaloupe	65	8
Banana	51	13
Mango	51	13
Orange	45	5
Grapes	43	7
Strawberries	40	4
Apple	38	6
Prune	29	4
Peach	28	2
Pear	28	4
Plum	24	2
Cherries	22	4
CANNED FRUITS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Peaches in syrup	59	29
Fruit cocktail	55	20
Pears in juice	44	12
DRIED FRUITS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Dates	103	42
Raisins	64	28
Apricots	32	23
DAIRY	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Whole milk	41	5
Yogurt, full-fat	36	6
Skim milk	32	4
Yogurt, low-fat w/fruit	27	7

CANDY AND SWEET TREATS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Jelly beans	78	22
Snickers bar	68	23
Ice cream	62	7
Milky Way bar	62	26
Pudding	44	9
Peanut M&Ms	33	6

SWEETENERS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Honey, 2 tablespoons	69	15
Table sugar, 2 teaspoons	68	7
Jam	44	12

SNACK FOODS	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Pretzels	83	16
Microwave popcorn	72	8
Corn chips	63	17
Potato chips	54	11

BEVERAGES	GLYCEMIC INDEX	GLYCEMIC LOAD
Cranberry juice cocktail	68	24
Cola	63	16
Orange juice	57	14
Grapefruit juice	48	11
Pineapple juice	46	15
Apple juice	41	12
Tomato juice	38	4

DIABETES 411: THE GLYCEMIC INDEX

As part of changing your diet, you're getting acquainted with something called the glycemic index and how it relates to the blood sugar you are trying to manage. A few years ago, if you'd told me I'd be writing about the glycemic index, I'd have said you needed to put down the bottle. Then again, I never thought I'd be talking about the president's reelection chances with Barbara Walters

or debating the merits of the Patriot Act with Whoopi Goldberg. Life is nothing if not an endless surprise.

The glycemic index and glycemic load are tools we have that can help us know exactly what the food we're eating will do to our blood sugar once that food is in our system.

Everybody is different. My body is super-sensitive to pasta—even looking at it seems to make my blood sugar spike. But you may be less sensitive: you might be able to indulge in a small plate of penne now and then without triggering cravings. The best way to understand your body's sensitivity to high-glycemic foods is to look at the list, choose foods with a low or medium index, and pay attention to how you feel. If you do indulge in a high-glycemic food, make sure you note how that food makes you feel. For instance, some people who are prediabetic can eat sweet potatoes and yams without triggering a reaction; me—no way. My body is too sensitive to the natural sugar in sweet potatoes, despite its high fiber content.

Using the glycemic index and the glycemic load gives us a road map, a starting place from which we can evaluate how particular foods influence our individual systems.

Glycemic Index

The glycemic index is a ranking system for how quickly food breaks down in the body and converts to glucose (or blood sugar). High-glycemic foods are made of simple carbohydrates that break down quickly, flooding the bloodstream with glucose and causing blood sugar to rise quickly.

Low-glycemic foods, on the other hand, are typically made of more complex carbohydrates, are generally higher in fiber, and therefore are harder for the body to digest. Slower digestion means a more gradual release of glucose into the bloodstream. Low-glycemic foods keep our blood sugar steady-as-she-goes.

Glycemic Load

The glycemic index gives us some important information, but it doesn't tell us everything we need to know about how a particular food will affect our blood sugar. The *glycemic load* measures how much of the carbohydrate is actually consumed in a given serving of food. If the glycemic index measures the *quality* of carbohydrate in food (simple or complex, or somewhere in between), then glycemic load measures the *quantity* of carbohydrate in a serving of that same food. Together, they give us a much more complete and accurate picture of how a food will affect our blood sugar.

What does this mean for you? Try to:

- Eat heartily from the low-glycemic end of the food scale—paying attention to *both* glycemic index and glycemic load.
- Eat carefully from the middle range of the glycemic index and foods with a mid-range glycemic load.
- Eat sparingly from the list of foods that are high on the glycemic index and have a high glycemic load.

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Foods You Will Be Avoiding

The crafty culprits: sugar, fat, and empty carbs

You don't have to remove these foods entirely from your diet, but you do need to shift your diet away from them. Rather than eating these foods every day, or even every week, make them an occasional indulgence, a small part of an otherwise high-fiber, low-fat, low-glycemic eating routine.

In my experience, it is darn near impossible to keep these

foods around and just eat less of them—at least at first. This is why I suggest cleaning out your cupboards and spending a couple of weeks without eating any of these foods. This will help you stop the cycle of cravings that keeps you going back to the cookie jar or the lasagna pan or the potato chip bag for serving after serving. It will also give your body time to adjust, since you'll be replacing these foods with lots of new ones, rich in fiber and nutrients. Think of it as hitting the reset button. Once you've reset your overall eating patterns, you can carefully reintroduce these foods in the small quantities and occasional servings that your body can handle, while keeping your blood sugar steady and losing weight.

Type 2 diabetes and prediabetes are both conditions that have food right at the bull's-eye. Those of us with diabetes, and those of you with prediabetes, cannot digest and process food in the way our bodies need. Rather than delivering the energy of food into our cells as fuel, the blood of a diabetic remains overwhelmed by glucose, or blood sugar. Excess glucose also gets stored as fat. Insulin is the human hormone that is supposed to manage the level of glucose in our bodies, by moving it from our blood to our cells, where it will be used as fuel. As diabetics, our bodies have lost the ability to use insulin effectively to move that glucose from our blood to our cells, where we can burn it for fuel. Our blood sugar levels rise, or “spike,” and cause symptoms that range from uncomfortable—like sleepiness or excessive thirst—to life threatening—like a diabetic coma. Without foods that spike blood sugar, there is no type 2 diabetes.

The first step is to say goodbye to the foods that helped make you sick. Think of these foods as the two-faced mean girls you went to high school with. You thought they were your

friends—they kept you company when you were lonely, they comforted you when your boyfriend dumped you, they took your mind off things when you were stressed. Turns out, they were working against you, behind your back, the whole time.

I'm not going to tell you that you'll never eat these foods again. You will. But they will go from being a frequent part of your diet to a very occasional visitor. And at first, in order to break their hold on you, you're not going to eat them at all.

After you've stopped the cycle of cravings, you'll slowly reintroduce some of these foods into your eating routine. They'll no longer be center stage. Think of them as bit players. That's right; you're sending those mean-girl foods to the back of the pack.

What are these two-faced foods? They're foods laden with sugar, starchy carbohydrates, and saturated fat. They're heavily processed foods, like those in the junk food aisle at the supermarket—where your heart maybe skips a beat—and in those fast-food places where you've memorized the menu. Back in the day, I could have recited more than a few fast-food menus by heart!

You're probably going to see some favorites on this list. I'm here to tell you I get it. I loved these foods too—some of 'em, I still love. (T-bone steak with a side of au gratin potatoes, anyone?) I gave them up because they were hurting me and threatening my life. And I am here to testify that life can be just as good—even better—without these foods.

Fats—the bad ones

Foods high in saturated fat are dangerous for diabetics, and they make it difficult to keep your weight in a healthy range. Foods can be naturally high in saturated fat, like bacon. Oth-

erwise healthy foods also can be cooked in a high-fat environment, which can make them unhealthful. Take fish, for example. Fish is a lean protein that also contains fat—but the fat in fish is good for you! It’s loaded with omega-3 fatty acids that support our brain and body functioning. But when you fry that piece of healthful white fish in a wide pool of butter or deep pot of oil, what was once a healthy meal becomes a no-no.

Processed foods can also be high in saturated fat—peanut butter, canola oil, donuts, tortillas, chips, nondairy dessert toppings, and any cream sauce slathered on your pasta. These scream: fat! So here’s your no-good fat list.

Meats

Bacon

Beef, especially high-fat cuts like ribs, brisket, and, yes, hamburger

Lamb

Pork, high-fat cuts (lean pork is a great choice)

Sausage

Skin-on poultry

Dairy

Cream (heavy, light, whipped, all of it. I don’t care if it’s whipped on the wings of angels. Get rid of it!)

Full-fat cheese

Full-fat cottage cheese

Full-fat sour cream

Full-fat yogurt

Half-and-half

Ice cream

Whole milk

Fried foods

Deep-fried anything—including good-for-you stuff like tofu and veggies

French fries (I know, this one is tough!)

Fried fish

Fried meat

High-fat snack foods (aka junk food!)

Chips: potato chips, tortilla chips

High-fat dip

Popcorn

Snack mixes

(Just look at the label of anything in a package; if you see fat on the list of ingredients, you can be sure it's a bad fat!)

Fats for cooking

Butter

Canola oil

Crisco

Palm oil

Peanut oil

Fats in processed foods

Coconut oil

Hydrogenated vegetable oil

Palm kernel oil

Partially hydrogenated vegetable oil

(You'll find these unhealthy oils in straight-up junk food, like chips and fried goodies, err . . . baddies. But stay alert, because you will also find these oils in places you might not expect: supermarket baked goods, crackers, snack foods, and even cereals.)

DIABETES 411

Trans fats. You might have heard a lot about these in the news lately. They're bad for everyone, diabetic or not. This type of fat, which is always a processed fat that does not occur in nature, is either a monounsaturated fat or a polyunsaturated fat. Because of their makeup, trans fats raise LDL (bad cholesterol) and lower HDL (good cholesterol) and are linked to heart disease. How do you spot a trans fat? Look for partially hydrogenated vegetable oil on the label of the packaged food you're considering. This is why it's so important to read labels—so you know exactly what you're eating and can avoid the foods that undermine your health, your weight loss, and your diabetes management. Want to know the easiest way to avoid these fats? Stop buying processed snacks and start making your own from simple, whole foods. In Chapters 9 and 10, I'll give you lots of suggestions for healthy and homemade snacks that can replace the junky and heavily processed foods that carry around these bad-for-you fats.

Sugars

Sugar is *everywhere*, people, not just in the obvious places. Sugar is a major ingredient in so many of the sweet treats we love, of course. But once you start looking, you'll find sugar tucked into lots of places you might not expect: things like salad dressing, crackers, and canned foods. You don't have to stop eating sugar altogether. But you do need to limit your

sugar intake. And the best way to accomplish that is to know exactly when and how much you are consuming. My sugar mantra? Make it count! That means I avoid sugar most of the time, and I stay away from unnecessary sugars in foods that don't need them. (Salad dressing? Ketchup?) That way, I can indulge in a little bit of good, old-fashioned, down-home sweet stuff every now and then!

Drinks

Alcohol (a little red wine once in a while is okay, but if you are going to have a mixed drink, skip the sugary juices usually used)

Coffee drinks

Energy drinks

Fruit juice with added sugar

Fruit punch

Hi-C and other fruit-substitute drinks

Soda (even diet soda—yes, this has no “real sugar,” but it's still going on the list of foods to avoid. I had a love affair with diet soda that finally ended and I've never felt better.)

“Fruity” Foods

Canned fruit in syrup

Fruit rolls/fruit leather

Jam, jelly preserves

Sweetened applesauce

Sweets

Cakes

Candy: hard candy, chocolate, candy bars

Coffee drinks

Cookies

Donuts and pastries

Ice cream

Pies

Sweet breads: think banana bread, zucchini bread

Syrup

Starchy carbohydrates: aka “The White Stuff”

Baked goods made with white flour

Bagels

Bread

Cakes

Cookies

Crackers

Muffins

Pie crusts

Rice—white or brown

White flour tortillas

Starchy vegetables

These starchy vegetables do have real nutrient value. You don't need to forsake them altogether. You just need to eat them in limited quantities and in combination with other, lower-glycemic veggies. Also, different types of these vegetables have different effects on your body. In the end, tune in

to how your body feels after having a small serving and see if you feel like you've triggered a rise in blood sugar.

Beets—beets are loaded with vitamins but are high in sugar; especially don't top them with marshmallow!

Carrots—carrots range in their glycemic index, depending a lot on how they are prepared. They do contain a lot of nutritional value, but when cooked or candied, they will spike your blood sugar!

Parsnips

Peas—the fresher and less cooked, the better.

Potatoes—new are better than Idaho, your classic baked potato.

Squash, including yellow squash, zucchini, acorn, and spaghetti squash

Sweet potatoes and yams—as I mentioned before, some diabetics can eat from this family, some of us cannot!

New Foods to Love: What You Will Be Eating

I may have changed my diet, but I haven't stopped loving food. Far from it. I used to eat so desperately and compulsively that I didn't really remember much about how that food tasted. Now the experience of eating for me is all about taste and texture, savoring and enjoying foods that nourish me, experimenting with new ingredients and flavors.

Healthy carbohydrates

I'm here to tell you that carbs are not all bad for you. Far from it. Certain carbs in large quantities—heavily processed, starchy carbs like breads, cakes, and cookies—are not good for you. They will perpetuate your weight problem and your diabetes.

But carbohydrates themselves are essential to our health. They're also enjoyable—and you can enjoy them without guilt or worry once you know to pick the right kind of carbohydrates. These “smart carbs” are rich in fiber, which slows digestion and ensures that blood sugar rises gradually. Crisp fresh fruits and vegetables, hearty whole grains, savory legumes—these healthy carbohydrates are also packed with nutrients. And remember, the longer it takes for food to break down in the body, the more gradually glucose is released into the bloodstream. These healthy carbohydrates do just that. Carbohydrates will make up 40 to 60 percent of your diet—they'll just need to be the right carbs.

Your friend *fiber*

What's the big deal with fiber? A lot, actually. Fiber is a diabetic's best friend.

High-fiber foods slow the digestion process, allowing carbohydrates to break down more slowly—that means a slower rise in blood sugar. Eating fiber-rich foods has been shown to reduce levels of “bad” LDL cholesterol because the fiber literally takes the fat out of the body. Over the long term, a high-fiber diet helps stabilize blood sugar levels by slowing down the release of insulin and aiding the absorption of nutrients the body needs. Fiber fills you up: you eat less, and what you eat gets used by the body more efficiently.

Healthy carbohydrates

Fruit*

Berries

Blackberries

Blueberries

Raspberries

Strawberries

Citrus

Clementines

Grapefruits

Oranges

Tangerines

Other

100 percent fruit juice (in small quantities)

Apples

Kiwi

Low-sugar jams or preserves (in small quantities)

No-sugar-added applesauce

Pears

**Note: Some fruits have more sugar than others and therefore may trigger your blood sugar more, including pineapple, bananas, papaya, mangoes, and other tropical fruits. When you enjoy these, try to pair the fruit with some protein to cut the sugar effect.*

Beans

Black beans

Black-eyed peas

Kidney beans

Lentils

Soybeans

Split peas

Whole grains*

Amaranth

Barley

Bran

Bulgur wheat

Oats

Quinoa

Whole grain bread made from oats, rye, spelt,
and whole wheat flours

**All rice has a high glycemic index, even though long-grain
brown rice is lowest in the category—so only eat moderate
amounts of rice on the D Plan.*

Vegetables

Leafy greens

Chard

Collard greens

Kale

Lettuces

Spinach

Other

Avocado (high-fat, but good for you; keep
portions small)

Bell peppers

Broccoli

Cauliflower

Celery

Cucumber

Mushrooms

Onions

Tomatoes

Lean protein

Protein converts slowly in the body to blood sugar. This means that it is easier for diabetics and prediabetics to transfer that glucose from our blood to our cells. Eating some protein with every meal is another way you'll keep your blood sugar in check while also losing weight. Protein-rich foods will make you feel full quickly, and so they are a great weight-loss tool. Plus, they keep you satisfied for a longer period of time, so you don't get hungry as quickly. As with carbs, the trick is to choose the right proteins. Because proteins are calorie-dense—and even lean protein has fat—it's also important to keep protein portions moderate. The good news is that there's a long list of lean, healthy proteins that you can make a part of your everyday eating. Lean protein will make up 20 to 30 percent of your diet.

Dairy

1 percent and skim milk (some people react sensitively to cow's milk on account of the sugar; you may also want to try lactose-free milk or almond milk, which tend to have less sugar)

Low-fat cottage cheese

Low-fat yogurt (no sugar added)

Nonfat half-and-half

Meat and animal proteins

Eggs

Fish

Pork, lean

Poultry (without the skin)

PROTEINS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

Full-fat dairy products

Heavily processed meats, including bacon, sausage, and corned beef

High-fat cuts of beef and pork

FATS TO LIMIT OR AVOID

Butter

Canola oil

Palm oil

Partially hydrogenated oils found in processed meals and snacks

Shortening

Good-for-you fats

Yes, fat is good for you! A fatty double cheeseburger is not good for you, but there's a whole world of healthy fats that are an important part of a balanced eating plan. These fats, like protein, help to balance the sugar effect of carbohydrates, as

well as support your immune system, brain functioning, and emotional balance (and we all need a little bit of that!).

Whereas saturated fat can raise cholesterol levels and inhibit the body's ability to use insulin to carry glucose from blood to cells, unsaturated fats actually help control blood sugar. Fat, like protein, helps to slow the digestion process, so carbohydrates break down more gradually and blood sugar rises slowly after eating. There *are* important reasons to limit the amount of fat in your diet—even these healthy fats. Fats pack a lot of calories, which can undermine your weight loss. And too much fat can actually slow the digestion process too much, leaving your blood sugar elevated for an extended period of time. To make the most of these healthy fats without overdoing it, try to include a small serving with every meal. For example, you can have a half avocado with your green salad, drizzle olive oil over some grilled vegetables, or create your own to-go nut-and-seed mix—these are all easy ways to make sure you include these essential fatty acids in your diet. Though it's best to eat your nutrition, you can take an omega-3 supplement, but make sure it is highly refined and of good quality; also, these tend to be expensive!

Healthy fats

Light salad dressing (watch out for added sugar in these if you're buying ready-made dressing)

Olive oil

Nuts and seeds

Almonds

Natural peanut butter—no sugar added

Pecans

Seeds, including pumpkin and sunflower

Walnuts

Vegetable oils

Coconut oil

Grapeseed oil

Safflower oil

Sesame oil

COCONUT OIL

In the past, this oil was thought of as bad for us, but new research has been shown that it's easily digested and can boost metabolism and energy. It also contains a fortifying ingredient (lauric acid) that seems to protect against viruses, lowers cholesterol, and increases our absorption of important vitamins such as A, D, E, and K. So add it to your list—and I think you'll like the way it tastes!

WHAT I DO: KICK THE BOTTLES

My fridge used to be full of bottled dressings and sauces and jars of salsa and dips. These products may be convenient, but they're not always healthy. Those squeeze bottles of salad dressing and marinades, those colorful jars of dips and salsas can be full of sugars and loaded with fats. I discovered that I don't have to give up on tasty dressings, dips, and sauces—I just need to make my own.

Salad dressings

I use olive oil and other healthy oils like walnut and grapeseed in combination with different vinegars to make tangy salad dressings. My favorite is a garlic-herb vinaigrette that I make in the blender. I peel and crush a clove of garlic, and pull a generous handful of fresh herbs from my stash in the fridge. I use whatever is handy: parsley, basil, oregano. Into the blender they go, along with equal parts vinegar (I like red wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar) and olive oil, about a quarter to a third of a cup of each. A dash of salt and pepper followed by a quick zap of the blender, and I've got a tangy, garlicky, super-healthy salad dressing.

Salsas

I make my own super-quick salsa with fresh (or canned) tomatoes, chopped onion, a sprinkle of cilantro, and a squeeze of lime. No cooking required—fresh salsa is great over fish and chicken, or as a snack with baked tortilla chips. I amp up the flavor and spice by adding chopped garlic and jalapeños or other hot peppers.

Dips

I make a delicious and decadent dip for veggies by mixing low-fat or nonfat Greek yogurt with fresh herbs, salt and pepper, and a little chopped garlic. Sometimes I take a

few spoonfuls of my garlic-herb salad dressing and swirl it right in the yogurt for a delicious dip to eat with raw veggies or to spread over cooked fish, chicken, or pork.

BBQ

I've even learned how to make my own barbecue sauce! I simmer a can of crushed tomatoes with a generous splash of apple cider vinegar, seasoned with chopped garlic, smoky dried paprika, a spoonful of honey, and a dash of salt and pepper. It's flavorful and fast and perfect on skinless chicken breasts. It's got that familiar barbecue flavor I crave, but unlike those bottled sauces, with my own version I get to control the sugar and fat.

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WHAT I DO: PLAN — AND PACK — MY SNACKS

Snacks can make or break my eating plan. Planning my snacks, I've found, is as important as planning my meals. Without a plan for snacking, I'm much more likely to find myself standing in front of the vending machine at work, lustily surveying the dangerous array of candy bars and potato chips, or veering into a bakery for a softball-sized muffin on my way to a meeting. My keep-on-track strategy for snacking involves making healthy, tasty, portable between-meal treats at home. Here are a few of my favorites.

Popcorn

I used to keep boxes of microwave popcorn in my pantry, thinking that this was a healthy alternative to potato chips or cheesy puffs. Popcorn is a great snack option—it's high in fiber and low in calories—but most processed microwave popcorn products are loaded with salt and fat. I got rid of my stash of store-bought microwave popcorn

when I cleaned my pantry of dangerous-to-me foods. But I still eat popcorn, and I still make it in the microwave. Did you know that you can microwave popcorn at home from scratch? My version keeps all the good-for-me goodness of popcorn and skips the added fat and salt. All you need is a glass bowl and a microwave-safe plate to act as a cover. Add popcorn kernels to the bowl, cover with the plate, and microwave on high for three to five minutes, until the popping starts to slow. The bowl itself will be hot, and steam will release when you remove the plate, so use a dish towel or pot holders. Poof! Just like that, you've got a popcorn snack—with no oil or butter. One-quarter cup of kernels will make four to five cups of popcorn. I store my popped corn in an airtight container, so it's fresh whenever I want to pack a snack. This is also a great treat to have on hand to handle nighttime snack cravings. I add flavor to my popcorn with a sprinkle of fresh Parmesan cheese, a pinch of salt, and some fresh ground pepper, or even a dash of chili powder.

Fruit-and-nut mix

Trail mix is another one of those store-bought products that can deceive you. Trail mix—sounds healthy, right? Sounded to me like the sort of snack a skinny person would eat while on a fifty-mile bike ride or in between sets of one-handed push-ups. Like popcorn, store-bought “trail mixes” often take healthful basic ingredients—in this case fruit and nuts—and load them up with fat, sugar, and salt. My solution? I make my own. It's simple to do, and the result is a delicious, filling snack that keeps well and is entirely portable. I buy an assortment of raw, unsalted nuts—I like almonds, walnuts, pistachios, and sunflower seeds—and toast them in the oven. Be sure to stay nearby while you're toasting nuts—by the time you can smell them, they're burned. I mix my nut medley with unsweetened dried fruits, at about a 3:1 ratio of nuts to fruit as a way

to keep the sugar levels of this snack in check. My favorite dried fruits are apricots, figs, dates, raisins, and cherries, and I use one or two of these in a batch. Dried fruits generally fall in the mid-range of the glycemic index, and they usually have a high glycemic load. Eating dried fruits in combination with protein-rich nuts lowers the overall glycemic impact of the snack mix. It's also important to keep portions moderate: a serving of about a third of a cup is plenty. This is a filling, calorie-dense snack where a little bit goes a long way.

Hummus and carrots or whole grain crackers

I keep hummus on hand and pack a snack-sized serving—a few tablespoons—into a small to-go container. I always have a bag of baby carrots in the fridge—they're already washed and peeled—and a handful goes right in that snack container. Sometimes I eat hummus with a few whole grain crackers instead of carrots—but only now and then, and only after I've read the label to make sure I'm eating crackers that *aren't* full of sugary additives.

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WHAT I DO: THE BOTTOMLESS SALAD BOWL

The bottomless salad bowl is just what it sounds like: a never-ending supply of salad. This is a simple strategy that has made a huge difference in my ability to eat healthfully on a daily basis. I keep a big bowl of my favorite chopped green salad in my fridge, ready to pull out to serve with dinner or pack a lunch for myself on days when I'm brown-bagging it. Here's the trick: I never let this bowl become completely empty. When the salad supply starts to run low, I set aside a few minutes, do some chopping and dicing,

and replenish my supply. I also keep a ready batch of my favorite homemade salad dressing. With a little planning—keeping my fridge stocked with the right ingredients, making time for salad prep a few times a week—I’ve always got a good-for-me meal or side dish on hand.

I can’t count how many times having this ready-to-eat salad has kept my daily eating on track. No matter how busy I am at the moment, I’ve always got a healthy option for lunch, dinner, or even an in-between-meals snack. There are a few keys to making the bottomless salad bowl work.

1. You’ve got to like eating it.

Trust me, if I didn’t actually enjoy this salad, it would wilt away in my refrigerator. My standard salad includes crispy romaine lettuce, shredded cabbage, chopped carrots and cucumbers, thinly sliced scallions, and juicy chunks of apple. I also like to toss in beans and reduced-fat feta cheese for protein. Tossed with a healthy, flavorful dressing, this is a fresh, crunchy, fun-for-my-taste-buds salad that I look forward to eating on a regular basis.

2. Mix things up.

I make sure to switch up ingredients in my salad bowl so I don’t get bored with the same old, same old. I use different kinds of greens. I’ll add chickpeas one day, and black beans another. I rotate other crunchy veggies like bell peppers, celery—even little broccoli florets.

3. Know what ingredients work.

One challenge of making salad in advance? If you use the wrong ingredients, things can get awfully soggy. I’ve learned a few tricks along the way to help extend the life of my salad, and they mostly have to do with controlling moisture. I stick to crunchy, firm veggies like carrots and cabbage, and crisp or firm greens like romaine and spinach. Tomatoes are wonderful in salads—and they’re a vitamin-rich, low-glycemic food—but they are full of liquid. If I have a hankering

for tomato, I'll chop one and add it to my serving of salad when I'm ready to eat. I love cucumbers, but they also have a high moisture content. I scoop out the gel and seeds in the center of the cucumber, leaving crunchy, firm flesh to chop into chunks.

THE TAKEAWAY: THE BASICS OF HEALTHY EATING ON PLAN D

- ✓ Clear your cupboards and fridge of starchy, high-fat, high-sugar, and processed foods.
 - ✓ For two weeks, refrain from eating simple carbohydrates, which are high-fat and high-sugar in any amounts.
 - ✓ Replace your starchy diet with a mix of healthy carbohydrates, lean protein, and unsaturated fats.
 - ✓ Practice portion control.
 - ✓ Eat frequently: three meals, two snacks. Don't go more than four hours without eating.
 - ✓ Combine foods to create a balanced, healthy meal that is also *satisfying*.
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DIABETES 411: HOW EXERCISE REDUCES INSULIN RESISTANCE

When we become insulin resistant, our bodies can no longer use insulin correctly, to deliver glucose from our blood to our cells. The good news is insulin resistance can be reversed—and exercise can make it happen. How does exercise renew the body's ability to use insulin?

Exercise creates an immediate demand for energy.

When we exercise, we burn fuel, and this causes our cells to call out for a resupply. This call-to-action helps our cells become more responsive to insulin to suck in glucose from our bloodstream, which regulates our blood sugar level.

Exercise pushes blood flow to the cells.

Strength training in particular sends a rush of blood to the muscles that are active, increasing blood flow to those particular cells. Part of reversing insulin resistance is improving the flow of blood to your cells.

Exercise reduces body fat.

If you're working out regularly and eating well, your body will have to rely on the energy stored in your fat cells. That means you're getting rid of excess body fat—and the sugar stored in those fat cells.

Exercise boosts metabolism.

Exercise is a great metabolism booster. This means we'll burn the calories we consume more efficiently, both during workouts and throughout the rest of the day. Because exercise is helping you build lean muscle mass, you are also able to use the excess glucose floating in your blood, and use it for energy. You will increase weight loss and balance your blood sugar all at once!

FIFTEEN IN FIFTEEN: WORKOUTS TO GET YOU STARTED

Too easy? Make these twenty-minute workouts, or thirty. Do one in the morning and one in the afternoon or evening.

- Walk around the block—once, twice, whatever it takes to fill those fifteen.
- Dance to an old-school favorite: mine is MJ's *Thriller*, your favorite R & B, or Madonna!
- Jog or march in place while watching fifteen minutes of the news or your favorite TV show.
- Vacuum your living room and bedroom.
- Clean out your closets.
- Do fifteen minutes of beginner yoga with a DVD.
- Walk or jog on the treadmill.
- Spend fifteen minutes of your lunch break moving—walk outside, walk up and down the stairs at your office.
- Take a five-minute walk before or after every meal (and that's three meals a day!).
- Rake leaves in your backyard.
- Start a garden and commit to working on it for just fifteen minutes every day.
- Hit up your local mall and walk its perimeter twice.
- Spend fifteen minutes playing with your kids at the park.

- Go to the park and take a walk with another mom—a workout buddy does wonders!
- Get on a stationary bike, or a real one, and take a fifteen-minute ride.

You get the idea! By adding just fifteen minutes each day, you'll be adding almost two hours of exercise a week!

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Ways to get cardio workouts

Climbing your stairs a few times

Dancing—in a class, in your living room, wherever you can make it happen

Hiking

Jogging

Mowing the lawn

Sweeping out your garage at a quick pace

Swimming

Vacuuming your house

Walking on the treadmill, around your neighborhood, or with your dog

Ways to strength train

DVD workout with free weights

Hauling groceries

Lifting your kids

Pilates

Weight circuit at the gym (most gyms will have machines set up with various arm-core-leg routines; ask a trainer for suggestions to alternate body areas)

Yoga

Ways to interval train

If you're dancing, turn up the volume and shake it *fast* for one minute. Repeat this every few minutes.

On a brisk walk, jog for short periods of time. Start with fifteen seconds, or thirty, and work up from there.

Speed up your walking pace for thirty to sixty seconds at a time, several times during a walk.

Cardio: two-minute cycle

Here is my basic two-minute cardio cycle. If this feels too rigorous for you, you can adjust the time you spend in the more vigorous exercises. Start with fifteen seconds of jump rope* or jumping jacks, and spend an extra fifteen seconds marching in place. To increase the difficulty, just add time—or plug in some additional types of cardio, like stair stepping or running in place.

Each two-minute cardio cycle contains:

Thirty seconds of marching in place

Thirty seconds of jumping jacks

Thirty seconds of marching in place

Thirty seconds of jumping rope

**You don't need an actual jump rope for this—you can pantomime this and work out just as hard.*

Strength-training exercises

For each strength-training exercise, try starting with one set of ten to twelve repetitions. Don't worry about the number of repetitions as you're getting started—if you need to do fewer than ten, that's fine. You can increase the number of repetitions to keep this workout challenging as your fitness improves. You can use regular hand weights—a two- or three-pound size is a good place to start—or you can get creative and find weights right in your own house. Try canned goods or bottled water from your pantry, pins from your kids' bowling set, or whatever you have handy. Just make sure whatever you choose can fit comfortably in your hands while you're moving.

Here we go!

Warm-up

Walk in place for three minutes.

Two-minute cardio cycle

Strength training

Push-ups

Relax, I'm not asking you to jump on the floor and give me ten perfect military-style push-ups. There are different versions of this strength move, and they all build muscle and strength. Start with the one that feels right to you.

Wall push-ups

Stand arm's length away from a wall. Put your palms on the wall, just wider than your shoulders. Bend your elbows and allow your upper body to move toward the wall. Keep your spine straight and your abdominal muscles engaged. Straighten your arms and raise your body back from the wall.

Modified floor push-ups

Get on your hands and knees on the floor, with your hands slightly wider than your shoulders. Slide your knees backward, away from your torso, until your back straightens and your bottom drops. Think of your body as creating a straight line from the top of your head, down to your spine and your bum. Bend your elbows—they'll stick out to the sides—and lower your upper body toward the floor. Engage your abdominal muscles and concentrate on keeping that straight line along the back of your body—you don't want your bottom sticking up in the air. Push back up and straighten your arms to finish the motion.

If you find that you fall somewhere in between the modified push-up and the wall push-up, here's an adjustment that may work for you: instead of putting your hands on the floor along with your knees, elevate your upper body by pushing against a firm and stationary surface—a sturdy coffee table could work, or a stack of firm sofa cushions.

Regular push-ups

If or when you're ready to move to a regular push-up, you'll set up on the floor just like for modified push-ups. Instead of staying on your knees, extend your legs back behind your body, resting your weight on your toes, with heels pointed to the ceiling. You want to feel a straight line along the back of your body, this time extending all the way from the top of your head to your heels. Engage your abdominal muscles and lower your upper body, elbows falling out to your sides.

Two-minute cardio cycle

Strength training

Squats

Stand with feet hip width apart. Stretch your arms in front of you at shoulder level. Send your bottom backward like you're sitting down in a chair. Keep your spine straight and engage your abdominal muscles. As your bum heads back, your knees will bend. As they bend, be sure to keep your knees over your ankles—you don't want your knees to extend over your toes. Go as far as you can into the squat while keeping your form. Don't worry about how far this is—any movement is good and muscle building, and you'll make progress as you repeat this workout. Push back to standing.

Bicep curls

Stand with feet hip width apart. Holding one weight in each hand, let your arms fall to your sides, with your palms facing your body. Lift weights toward your shoulders, keeping your elbows still and aligned with the sides of your body. Lower the weights and return your arms to their original position.

Two-minute cardio cycle

Strength training

Lunges

Stand with one foot forward and the other foot back, as if you're just starting to move into a split. Bend both knees into a lunge. Watch your front knee: as with squats, you don't want that knee to extend over your toes. Keep your spine straight and your abdominal muscles engaged. For extra balance, do your lunges next to a wall, and place a hand on the wall for support.

Tricep curls

Stand with your feet hip width apart. Hold one of your weights with both hands, one hand at each end. Take the weight up above your head until your arms are nearly straight. You want to keep a very slight bend in your elbow. Gently lower the weight behind your head, bending your uplifted arms at the elbow. Raise the weight and straighten your arms to complete the move.

Two-minute cardio cycle

Strength training

Lateral arm lifts

Stand with legs hip width apart, with one weight in each hand. Let your arms relax at your sides, with your elbows just slightly bent. Lift both arms to shoulder level, then lower.

Bicycle abs

Lie on a mat or a comfortable surface. Tuck your hands behind your head. Pull your knees up and toward your chest, at about a 45-degree angle. Lift your shoulders off the floor—take care and do this gently, you don't need to come up far. Most important, you don't want to strain your neck. Keep your neck muscles relaxed and let your abdominal muscles do the work. Bring your right elbow and your left knee toward each other, then release them. Repeat this move with your left elbow and your right knee. Once you get going, this will feel like a pedaling motion. You might feel tempted to fling yourself through this move, but don't. There's nothing to be gained by speed here: concentrate on completing the movements with good technique. Keep your breathing steady and relaxed throughout the exercise. Try starting with one minute of bicycle abs.

Two-minute cardio cycle

Cool down

Walk in place—or around the room—for three minutes.

Real-life workouts for nowhere near the gym

Go for a bike ride with your partner or your kids . . . or both!

Take your family to the beach and go for a swim or a walk/jog in the sand.

Pick an activity to learn with your mate. Join a couples yoga class, or . . .

Join a recreational sports league: anything from softball to bowling.

Find a hike . . . and take it!

Take a dance class.

Play tag or hide-and-seek with your kids.

Do chores around the house such as vacuuming, sweeping, washing windows.

If you have a dog, take him on a walk around the block.

If you don't have a pet, take yourself for a walk around the block.

Climb stairs instead of taking the elevator or escalator.

If you have a Wii, try one of the easy exercise games—by yourself or with a friend.

Try swimming or water aerobics at the Y!

Take a Zumba class—these are inexpensive and popular.

WHAT I DO: GET MOVING IN THE MORNING

Time has a way of slipping away from us as the day goes on. You can plan a perfectly synchronized day, full of saintly and virtuous activities, and then *bam!* Real life hits. Your kid comes home sick from school. You get an unexpected visit from your mother-in-law. Your boss gives you a new project, with a due date of *right now!* This is why I try to get in some exercise first thing in the morning. It's my way of guaranteeing myself some of my planned physical activity before the day gets away from me. You don't have to do all your workouts in the early morning. But planning to exercise early in the day can help guarantee that you get in your workout. Early exercise also gets your metabolism revved up, helping you burn calories for the rest of the day! Although my favorite time of day to work out is first thing in the morning or just after I get Jeffrey off to school, sometimes that just doesn't work with work. So I fit in my exercise after I get off work or on a lunch break. But believe you me, I plan it out as much as I can ahead of time so I know I will get it done. It makes me crazy in the head if I don't get my exercise in!

HOW TO DANCE LIKE A STAR: PRO TIPS FOR EXERCISE

I learned so much from my time on *DWTS*. I learned that sequins really do make you shimmy better. I learned I have muscles in places I don't even let my husband touch. Most important, I learned about how true athletes train and care for their bodies. It was such an eye-opening experience. It was also a knee-buckling, ankle-swelling, *Lord help me, I'm gonna fall over* experience!

My everyday, catch-as-you-can workouts have changed forever as a result of my all-too-brief moonlighting gig as a dancer. I'm back to wearing my schlumpy workout clothes, and I've traded heels for sneakers, but my workouts will never be the same. You don't need a sequins-and-feathers getup—though if that floats your boat and gets you moving, well then costume up!

You also don't need a pro dance partner—but if you can find one as cute as mine, you ought to snap him up. You don't need cameras following your every step—or in my case, misstep! In addition to calluses in places I never imagined possible, some seriously twisted-up toes, and a whole new appreciation for structured undergarments, I took home from *DWTS* a whole new set of skills and strategies for working out. Here are my best tips for exercising like a dancer, straight from the pros.

Work your whole body.

There's nothing like dancing for a whole-body workout. When I was doing *Dancing with the Stars*, I was introduced for the first time to muscles that I've apparently carried around in my body for forty-plus years and never knew about. My back, my legs, and my butt hurt like I had been mashed by a steamroller! But the biggest discovery

of all was my core—who knew that I had muscles under that belly and chest! There’s a reason that those dancers you see cha-cha-ing around in sleek outfits look so good from head to toe: their demanding training regimen works their entire bodies.

You can create an at-home version of this head-to-toe workout. The combination of cardio and strength training can give you a whole-body workout—if you let it. Don’t ignore a part of your body because it feels weak, or because you don’t like a particular exercise. Make some adjustments to make the workout right for you. Frustrated because you can’t complete a set of bicep curls? Pick up a lighter hand weight and work gradually toward your goal. The very thought of lunges makes your knees wobble and ache? Try squats or leg lifts instead.

Swimming, yoga, and Pilates are all great activities for working out your whole body all at once. My favorite? Dancing, of course!

Stretch—before, during, and after

Stretching is kind of like flossing your teeth: you know you’re supposed to do it, that it’s good for you, but a lot of times it’s a step that you just skip. Okay, confession: I’m actually a proud and diligent flosser. I figure that I talk so much, I’d better keep my pearly whites looking good. But I have always been a lousy stretcher. After *Dancing with the Stars*, I decided to be as good to my muscles as I am to my choppers. Dancers stretch, big muscles and small ones, from their neck and shoulders to their toes. Stretching can help improve flexibility and widen your range of motion, which in turn can reduce your risk of injury from exercise. Stretching also improves blood flow to muscles throughout the body. Improving circulation is important for us diabetics and prediabetics.

Stretching tips

Don't bounce. Keep your stretch steady, and use even and slow movements to move into and out of your stretch.

Don't force it. You should feel a pull, but you should never feel pain.

Don't stretch cold. It's not a good idea to stretch before a workout, before you've had a chance to warm up your muscles. Save the stretching for after your workout. But don't skip it!

Here are some good general stretches that will open your joints and big muscle groups:

Sit in a butterfly stretch, with feet together, and gently let your knees fall to the sides.

Lie on your back and lay one leg over the opposite hip or knee to open your back; alternate sides.

Lie on your back and, using a yoga strap or stretchy band at the bottom of your foot, gently pull in your leg to stretch the hamstring; alternate.

To stretch your quads, stand next to a railing or wall for support; raise the outer leg, and bend it back at the knee. Don't force it; only stretch as much as you can feel the quad stretching.

Technique matters

Flinging yourself through a workout routine may feel like the only way to make the most of it, but you're missing out if you do. Dancers are all about technique. They think about every part of their body when they're learning a routine. They stand up straight, they follow through on every movement, they practice control. Paying attention to technique can help you make more of your workout.

I remember the first time my trainer, Kira, taught me to do proper squats. You don't just stick out your butt and hope it goes down: you can really hurt your knees and back if you don't pull in your core. My technique? I pretend I am using a public toilet.

When I first started using a treadmill? I almost fell off, I felt so clumsy! The point is, learning good technique means paying attention.

Technique will put emphasis on muscles that might otherwise get ignored. Technique can help prevent injury. This can be as simple as thinking about your posture when you are taking a walk, squaring your hips and flexing your feet during a cardio dance class, or flattening your back during push-ups. Chances are if an exercise feels too easy, you're probably not using great technique. If you are a member of a gym, seek out a trainer to ask about proper technique. Another good way to learn proper technique for exercising and stretching is by taking a yoga or Pilates class, where you learn specific ways to position your body and maintain its alignment before, during, and after exercise.

Work out with a buddy.

Man, did I get lucky. I had the most dedicated, talented, and supportive dance partner on *DWTS*—and he was Russian. And let me tell you, keeping me upright on that dance floor took some serious supporting! I made a bunch of friends for life on *DWTS*, but nobody more so than my awesome partner, Val. Spending hours together every day in rehearsal, having all manner of body parts right up close in each other's space . . . you bond. Now I'm not saying you need to get *this close* to your workout buddy. But there's nothing like having a pal to work out with, to train together, egg each other on, keep each other focused, and make each other laugh.

Now that *DWTS* is over, I have other workout buddies—Jeffrey, Sal, and sometimes a trainer. Maybe your workout partner is a friend, a neighbor, your husband, your sister: whoever you choose, recruiting someone to work out alongside you will make your workouts more fun. And fun workouts are the kind you want to do again and again.

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THE TAKEAWAY: SHAPE UP TO SLIM DOWN AND REVERSE YOUR INSULIN RESISTANCE

- ✓ Start moving: just fifteen minutes a day. Work your way up from there.
 - ✓ Make your workouts a combination of cardio, strength training, and interval training.
 - ✓ Your goals:
 - Cardio: thirty minutes a day, five days a week.
 - Strength: three times a week for twenty minutes.
 - Intervals: include them in two workouts per week.
 - ✓ Find ways to work out away from the gym.
 - ✓ Set manageable goals.
 - ✓ Turn your excuses into opportunities.
 - ✓ Don't wait for a magic hour to appear: make every spare minute count!
 - ✓ Work it like a *star*!
-

The Takeaway: Work Your Steps!

- ✓ Identify your food weaknesses.
- ✓ Learn what hungry feels like.
- ✓ Manage your stress.
- ✓ Know your body and how you react to trigger foods.
- ✓ Use these questions to explore your real relationship with food. If my questions don't work exactly right for you, then create your own.

Am I hungry?

No, really: Am I hungry?

Why do I want to eat this?

Is this a safe food, or a dangerous food, or somewhere in between?

Is there some other food that I can combine with this food to lower its impact on my blood sugar?

What else have I eaten today?

How will it feel to eat this?

How will this food make me feel *after* I've eaten it?

What will this food enable me to do?

What will this food *prevent* me from doing?

Can my body handle this food today, *right now*?

YOUR DREAM BOARD

Use imagery to create pictures of the dreams for your life that you'd like to make real. Then, use those pictures to help keep yourself motivated and on track, day by day, as you work to change your diet and your health. Get creative, and think big! I'm living proof that the scope of the dreams you can achieve is only limited by your imagination. And sometimes dreams have a way of surpassing even those things you can imagine.

Here are some ideas to get you started. Think about:

Places you want to travel to

What are the sights you want to see in the world? How do you want to feel when you're traveling, passport in hand?

Special moments with your sweetheart

Whether it is dancing together at a fancy party or playing around on the beach—what are the special moments you'd like to share with your sweetie? Imagine yourself feeling sexy and energized and healthy during all those special times with your true love.

Changes to your work life

Are you an office dweller who secretly longs to work outdoors? An accountant who'd like to teach yoga? Take it from a former legal temp: you can make the leap you dream of making. Your stamina, your energy level, and your health can support you in these dreams.

Your fitness goals

Imagine yourself . . .

running a 5K race.

swimming ten or twenty or thirty laps in the pool.

hiking a mountain.

No matter what your dreams are, you're going to need your health to achieve them.

Can you think of a better dream than living a long life?

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Sample Serving Sizes of Everyday Foods

Fats and oils

Butter: 1–2 teaspoons

Cream cheese: 1 tablespoon

Prepared salad dressing: 1 tablespoon

Vegetable oils: 1–2 teaspoons

Fish, meat, poultry, and other proteins

Canned tuna: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Egg: 1 egg

Fish: 2–3 ounces

Pork: 2–3 ounces

Poultry: 2–3 ounces

Red meat: 2–3 ounces

Tofu: 4 ounces

Low-fat dairy

Cheese: 2 ounces

Cottage cheese: $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

Milk: 8 ounces (1 cup)

Yogurt: 1 cup

Bread, cereal, and grains*

Bagel: $\frac{1}{2}$ small

Bread: 1 slice

Cooked cereal: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Crackers: 4–6 crackers

Dry cereal: $\frac{3}{4}$ cup

English muffin: $\frac{1}{2}$ muffin

Pasta: $\frac{1}{3}$ cup

Pita: $\frac{1}{2}$ large, or 1 small

Rice: $\frac{1}{3}$ cup

Tortillas: one 6-inch tortilla

**Remember: as much as possible, go for the whole wheat or whole grain version of bread, crackers, and muffins; they will contain much more fiber and lower GI.*

Starchy vegetables

Peas, corn: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked

Potato: 1 small, or $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Nonstarchy vegetables

Cooked vegetables: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Raw, leafy, and other nonstarchy vegetables:

1–2 cups per serving

Vegetable juice: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Fruits

Cooked or canned fruit: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (avoid canned fruit that has added sugar)

Dried fruit: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

Fresh fruit: 1 medium-size piece

Fruit juice: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Beans, legumes, and nuts

Cooked beans: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup per serving, or more if you are using the beans as a protein substitute

Nuts: $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

Peanut butter and other nut butters:

2 tablespoons

Sweets and desserts*

Cake or pastry: 1 small slice, or 1 small

Cookies: 2 small or medium, or 1 large

Ice cream: ½ cup

**These should not be indulged in daily; limit your sweets to one to three times per week.*

SHERRI'S FAVORITE PANTRY STAPLES

These are the basic foods I have on hand all the time. From these simple, affordable whole foods, I can make any meal of the day a healthy one for me.

Beans

Lentils, black beans, and chickpeas are among my favorites.

Eggs

Inexpensive, quick, and delicious. I'm never without eggs.

Yogurt

I'm partial to nonfat plain Greek yogurt, but any no-sugar-added, low-fat, or no-fat yogurt deserves a place in your pantry.

Healthy whole grains

I keep my pantry stocked with quinoa, barley, and brown rice.

Garlic and onions

These flavor stars are also rich in antioxidants and good for the heart. They are the base of so many of my favorite homemade meals, from chilis and stews to vegetable casseroles.

Canned tomatoes

Research shows that cooked tomatoes have even more potent health benefits than fresh. I use canned tomatoes for soups and salsas, and with meats and fish.

Frozen fruit and vegetables

Peaches and berries are great fruits for smoothies and in oatmeal or yogurt. I keep frozen broccoli, cauliflower, and spinach on hand for stir-fries and egg-white scrambles.

Nuts and nut butter

Peanut butter is a longtime staple in my pantry. Nowadays, I choose the no-sugar-added kind. I've also added almond butter to my list of nutty favorites. I keep raw nuts like walnuts, pistachios, and almonds for healthy snacking and crunchy garnishes for salads, smoothies, and my morning oatmeal.

Leafy greens

I keep in my fridge crunchy lettuces like romaine for salad. I always have spinach greens in there as well—they're great raw or cooked!

Apples

My favorite fruit. Apples are terrific as a snack combined with a little protein, like cheese or peanut butter. I also dice them and toss them in my salad.

Citrus fruit

I like oranges and grapefruit for eating, and I keep lemons and lime for flavor in cooking and to add to water and tea.

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LOVE YOUR LEFTOVERS

I've always loved leftovers. I used to love having cold pizza in the morning, or a slice of my mom's lasagna for lunch the day after a family dinner. Leftover takeout was always hanging out in my fridge, back when my primary cooking utensil was the telephone. My eating has changed completely since then, but my love of leftovers hasn't. I still love 'em, and I still use 'em. Here's why you should, too.

Leftovers save time.

Using your leftovers from last night's dinner in today's lunch, or tomorrow's breakfast, cuts down on your prep time for those meals. I plan to cook extra of my favorite foods so that I have them on hand to eat throughout the week. A big pot of beans, an extra few servings of slow-cooking, steel-cut oatmeal, a pan of roasted veggies that go right into the fridge: these are some of my favorite "planned" leftovers.

Leftovers save money.

This one's easy. Using up what you've got in the fridge cuts down on your grocery bills, plain and simple. I love eating well AND having it be cost effective. I'm a bargain shopper at heart, so this gives me a thrill, sort of like finding a cute dress on the clearance rack at a fancy department store.

Leftover healthy food is still healthy food.

Using your healthy leftovers is a great way to ensure that you eat as well the next day as you did the night before. Those cooked greens that you ate with chicken last night? Scrambled with an egg and an egg white, they become the base of a tasty breakfast. That pot of rice and beans you simmered over the weekend? That's a few healthy, high-fiber lunches already made and ready to take to work.

Your Week of Snacks, Meals, and Exercise

Monday

Monday mornings come just a bit earlier than other mornings, don't they? I don't like to have to fuss around with breakfast on a Monday—but I want to start the week off right, so I use one of my stick-to-it tricks. The night before, I make a pot of oatmeal. It bubbles away on the stove while Sal and I are cleaning up from dinner, or sitting around the table talking. All I have to do is heat it up in the morning! This is especially helpful since I'm exercising first thing today. After my blessedly quick and quiet breakfast, I kiss my sleeping family goodbye and hightail it to the gym.

Monday's breakfast: oatmeal with mixed berries and almonds

½ cup oatmeal, cooked

**½ cup berries—pulled right from the freezer,
and heated up with my oat cereal**

1 tablespoon nuts, sprinkled on top

WEEKDAY TIP FOR MONDAY: COOK AHEAD

My meal prep for the workweek actually starts on the weekend. On Sunday afternoons, I like to cook a few basic dishes that I know will get eaten during the week. I simmer a pot of beans: black beans or kidney beans, usually. Then I have them on hand to toss into other dishes

I will cook during the week. I will also roast a whole chicken, or a turkey breast, so I have a ready source of lean protein to add to soups, stir-fry, or salads. These cooking tasks don't take a lot of time: I can do them while I'm making my meal plan for the week or doing chores around the house. They are a great time-saver, and they help ensure we'll be eating great-tasting, low-glycemic, highly nutritious food all week long!

Exercise

I'm heading to the gym this morning before work. I like to get a gym workout done first thing during the week. Otherwise, it is all too easy to push exercise down the road and decide to make time tomorrow. I try to remember that when it comes to taking care of my body and protecting my health, there is no tomorrow: today is all I've got.

Monday's exercise

Five-minute warm-up

Twenty minutes of strength training using machines and free weights

Thirty minutes of cardio: today it's fifteen minutes on the elliptical machine and another fifteen on the treadmill.

The last thing I want is my stomach rumbling when I'm sitting at the *View* table. My growling stomach is loud, people. You could probably hear it sitting on your couch at home. I make sure to have a snack before taping, so my tummy isn't rumbling and my blood sugar isn't plummeting.

Since my breakfast wasn't heavy on protein, I make sure that my snack packs a protein punch. Eggs are a great source of protein. They're one of my pantry staples.

Monday's morning snack

1 hard-boiled egg

1 apple, sliced

I'm on the hunt for a vegetable-filled lunch today. Gotta get those veggie servings in! I've found that making sure my week gets off to a healthy start really makes a difference in how the rest of the week goes. Doing well with my diet and exercise on Monday sets the tone for the rest of the week. I strike gold in the lunch department: the cafeteria at work has a yummy, tomatoey minestrone soup. It is heavy on the vegetables, with a healthy tomato broth and lots of good-for-me beans. Plus, there are a few knobs of pasta noodles mixed in, making this soup healthy with just a little indulgence! It's okay to have a little pasta here and there, and this soup is the perfect way to have a taste without making pasta the star of my meal and gobbling up a whole plate. I grab a whole grain roll—pass on the butter, I'll just dunk it—and head back to my office.

Monday's lunch: vegetable minestrone with a whole wheat roll

1½ cups minestrone soup

1 medium-size whole grain roll

I'm running from one job to the next today before picking up Jeffrey from school in the midafternoon. So much for easing into this week! Before I start scurrying from one thing to the next, I make sure to have a snack with me for the afternoon. Some fruit and a little protein will keep my blood sugar steady and fill me up without weighing me down. I make my own fruit-and-nut mix, so I can control the amount of sugar

and salt. My homemade version is toasty, crunchy, and just a little sweet. I keep a stash of this healthy, no-sugar-added fruit-and-nut mix in my office for just this kind of day. Today's version contains a mixture of toasted walnuts and almonds, with raisins and some chopped apricots.

Monday's afternoon snack

1 small banana

¼ cup dried-fruit-and-nut mix

Just like with breakfast, I don't like to have to fuss over dinner on the first night of the week. Because I did some advance cooking over the weekend and baked a chicken (or chicken breasts), I get to come home to a meal that's already under way. Plus, it's one of Jeffrey's favorites: chicken fajitas. I do a quick cooking of peppers, onions, and zucchini strips on the stove, and throw the already cooked chicken in at the end to warm up. Meanwhile, I'm heating some whole wheat tortillas in the toaster oven. My bottomless salad bowl is full to the brim, so all I have to do is pull out the bowl and give my healthy homemade dressing a shake. It's good for family morale to start the week with a meal that everybody likes but doesn't require a lot of effort from Mama.

Monday's dinner: chicken fajitas

3 ounces chicken, cut into strips

1 cup sautéed vegetables: peppers, onions, zucchini

one 6-inch whole wheat tortilla

Green salad

Tuesday

I love a savory breakfast. I also love using leftovers in breakfast. It saves time. It saves money. And good food almost always tastes even better the next day! Tuesday's breakfast uses those yummy veggies from last night's fajita fest in a healthy scramble. It's a surprisingly quick breakfast—again, everything cooks in one pan and it takes only a few minutes. While I'm scrambling my eggs and veggies, I toast a mini pita bread and melt a little bit of low-fat cheese on top. Sal loves this breakfast so much it gets him out of bed!

Tuesday's breakfast: egg-white scramble with sautéed vegetables and a cheesy pita toast

2 egg whites

½ cup sautéed veggies

1 teaspoon butter, for cooking

1 small whole wheat round pita

1 tablespoon low-fat cheese, shredded

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WEEKDAY TIP FOR TUESDAY: VEGGIES FOR BREAKFAST

When you're planning your meals, think about ways you can include some vegetables at breakfast once or twice a week. Having vegetables in the morning is one way to ensure your breakfast is a healthy one, and it also gives you a head start on meeting your veggie servings for the day. When you go out for breakfast, order something—like an omelet or a frittata—with vegetables in it!

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I didn't have any fruit with breakfast, so I make sure my snack gets me some fresh fruit. While going over my notes for the show, I nibble on one of my favorite snacks: apples with peanut butter. I make sure to use natural, no-sugar-added peanut butter. It actually tastes a lot more like peanuts than the sugar-filled stuff!

Tuesday's morning snack

1 apple, sliced

1 tablespoon natural peanut butter

It's easy to get in the habit of buying lunch every day. I'm as guilty of this as the next person. But I try to avoid this habit, for a few reasons. First, it gets expensive, quick! I've got plenty of other ideas about how to spend my money, thanks very much. Just ask Sal. Also, packing a lunch means I know exactly what I'm putting in my body. Store and deli and restaurant food can look and sound healthy, wholesome, and waistline friendly, but there can be tons of hidden fats, salt, and other ingredients that can throw your diet off course. Don't be afraid to ask how something is prepared before you buy it. But if you brown-bag it, you don't have to ask. For today's lunch I pack a generous serving of salad from the supply in my fridge and add some chicken slices and a sprinkling of sliced almonds. I tuck a whole wheat pita in there, and I'm good to go.

Tuesday's lunch: green salad with chicken and almonds

2 cups green salad

3 ounces chicken

¼ cup almonds

1 whole wheat pita

1 tablespoon olive-oil-and-vinegar dressing

Somebody at the *View* offices brought in cookies to share with the crew and cast. This kind of stuff happens all the time. It's somebody's birthday. Someone else is getting married. Somebody else just got promoted. And we always seem to want to celebrate with sweets—cakes, cookies, cupcakes. Whether you're diabetic, prediabetic, or trying to lose weight, you don't have to avoid these treats altogether. You just can't say yes all the time. I scope out these cookies making the rounds. They're tempting, for sure. But I work my steps. My lunch was really satisfying and filling, so I'm not feeling particularly hungry. I know there are going to be other tempting indulgences coming my way this week, so I decide to pass. An hour or so later, when I'm feeling hungry, I have a small bag of my homemade popcorn. It's a little cheesy, a little salty, and it hits the spot.

Tuesday's afternoon snack

1 cup homemade popcorn, sprinkled with Parmesan cheese and chili powder

For tonight's dinner I'll start using the kidney beans I cooked over the weekend. You can use any kind of bean that you like. If you don't want to cook them yourself, go ahead and use canned beans. I keep a can or two of beans in my pantry for nights when I need to turn around dinner extra fast.

I love pork, and I used to eat only the fattiest pork: strips of

bacon, fat barbecued ribs. I thought I'd have to give up pork altogether when I started this new way of eating. I was wrong. I didn't have to give up my favorite meat, I just had to start eating leaner versions of it. Pork tenderloin is now one of my favorite meals. It cooks great in the oven or on the grill, and it's juicy and flavorful, especially after it's been marinated. For a quick and delicious marinade I use olive oil or sesame oil and apple cider vinegar, with a handful of fresh herbs that I keep in the fridge. I always cook more than what Sal, Jeffrey, and I need for our meal—you'll see this pork make a delicious return later in the week. While the pork is roasting in the oven, I cook some rice to go with those beans. A few spoonfuls of fresh, pre-made salsa I picked up at the grocery store goes in with the rice and beans to make a tangy, tasty side dish for our pork. Sometimes I spread the salsa right over the pork as well.

Tuesday's dinner: pork tenderloin with rice and beans

3 ounces pork, oven cooked

1 cup rice and beans

2-3 tablespoons salsa

Exercise

Sal and I have a dance class tonight! I loved to dance before I was on *Dancing with the Stars*. Now? I'm obsessed! This is one of the great things that happens when you start moving and trying new things: you find new passions. I don't feel like waiting for the end of the day to get a little exercise, so I add some extra time to my walk to the subway by skipping the stop closest to my house, and walking to the next stop on the

line. This adds fifteen minutes of cardio to my day, and I get to people-watch in my neighborhood as I go.

Tuesday's exercise

Fifteen-minute walk and forty-minute dance class

On your own: hit up a Zumba or a cardio-dance class at your local gym or YMCA. Do a workout to a cardio-dance DVD.

At home: put on some music and dance for fifteen minutes while you clean your house.

Find fifteen minutes in your day to walk: walk to work instead of driving. Take a fifteen-minute walk at lunch or after dinner. Take a quick five-minute walk after breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Wednesday

On mornings when I'm working out first thing, I like to eat my breakfast while I'm doing other stuff to get ready and get myself out the door. So this morning's breakfast comes in a glass. But this is nothing like those liquid diets I once did. It's a glass full of vitamins, a balance of carbohydrates, protein, and fat, with plenty of fiber. I blend low-fat plain yogurt with frozen berries, crushed ice, and a few nuts for some extra protein. Then I drink my yummy, good-for-me breakfast while I wander the house looking for my other shoe.

Wednesday's breakfast: yogurt-berry-peach smoothie

1 cup low-fat yogurt

½ cup frozen fruit: I love the combination of

berries and peaches**1 tablespoon almonds or other nuts****1 teaspoon cinnamon*****Exercise***

Wednesday is another gym day for me. I schedule my gym time in the mornings, so the day doesn't get away from me. I love the feeling of having completed a workout while the day is just starting. You might think that exercising in the early morning will make you tired for your day. Actually, it's just the opposite. Exercising early in the day can make you feel more energized, not less. My workout at the gym today is circuit training. This is a great way of working out that combines cardio and strength training at the same time. A circuit includes several exercises—you do each one for a short period of time and then move right on to the next and then the next. After you've completed one full circuit, you do another!

Wednesday's exercise

Thirty minutes of circuit training at the gym

On your own: sign up to learn how to use the circuit machines at your gym.

Work out with a DVD that combines strength and cardio—most of them do! I think of working out on my own as my do-it-yourself option: it takes place at the gym or elsewhere and may include equipment, but no trainer.

When I work out at home, I do a very low-maintenance version of the exercise. This is

great for those of you who don't want to go to the gym at all or don't want to or can't invest in a gym membership.

At home: strength-training walk (you can also hike or jog!)

Walk (or jog) for fifteen to thirty minutes. Stop every five minutes and do a quick strength-training workout.

Do ten squats: Stand with your feet hip-width apart. Bend your knees and drop into a squat position. Send your bum right out behind you! You don't have to go far—do as much as you can.

Do ten standing push-ups, using a tree or a telephone pole. Stand arm's length from the tree, with your palms against the tree. Bend your arms and move toward the tree, keeping your back straight. Straighten your arms to come out of the push-up.

Since I ate—or drank, really—my breakfast pretty early this morning and I worked out, by midmorning I'm ready for a snack. I grab one of my favorite snacks: hummus. I eat it with veggies, spread on whole grain toast or pita, or right off the spoon! Today I have some hummus with a few whole grain sesame crackers. It's a crunchy, smooth snack that's all good: good tasting and good for me.

Wednesday's morning snack

¼ cup hummus

6 round whole grain sesame crackers

Today I have a work lunch, a sit-down meal with a group of people. I used to feel nervous when I'd go to restaurants. Would I be able to avoid temptation? Would I find something decent for me to eat that I actually liked? What happens when someone else chooses the restaurant? I've learned that I can always make a menu work to my advantage, using a few basic strategies. I look for meals in the appetizer section, to help with portion control. I ask for stuff on the side—dressings, sauces. These are often the most fat-laden part of the meal, and keeping them separate allows me to control how much I consume. I've also learned to speak up and ask questions: about how a meal is prepared and what its ingredients are.

Today we hit up a bistro with a pretty full menu. I find two appetizers—a salad and a small plate of grilled shrimp with a fruit salsa—that together make a great, satisfying, and low-glycemic lunch. And unlike some of my lunch companions who opted for heavy bowls of pasta, I won't be feeling like I need a nap in a couple of hours.

Wednesday's lunch: salad and shrimp

Garden salad

Grilled shrimp with a pineapple salsa

Seltzer with lime wedge

You can make my bistro lunch at home, no problem. Pick up some frozen shrimp at the grocery store, or buy it already cooked. When you're in the mood for a salad like this, just pull a few shrimp from the freezer, reheat them, and toss them with your standard salad greens and favorite dressing!

Wednesday's dinner is a simple, unfussy meal of roasted

salmon, veggies, and quinoa. Doesn't sound simple? It is! Quinoa is not only one of the healthiest grains you can eat, packed with fiber and protein, it also cooks up in a snap. I cook the quinoa while I'm preparing the salmon and veggies for roasting and preheating the oven. I can roast the fish and the vegetables at the same time. Since they cook in the oven, I don't have to stand over the stove—and while dinner's cooking, I get to spend time with my kid.

Wednesday's dinner: roasted salmon, veggies, and quinoa

3 ounces salmon, roasted

1 cup roasted vegetables (bell peppers, zucchini, onions)

½ cup quinoa

Green salad

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WEEKDAY TIP FOR WEDNESDAY: TAKE YOUR WEIGHTS HOME

You don't have to belong to a gym to get all the benefits of strength training. You can bring weight training home. Invest in a set of light hand weights for upper body strength training. They're not too expensive. Or make your own with stuff you have around the house: grab a couple of food cans, use a pair of unopened water bottles. Take a milk jug or an empty water bottle and fill it with dirt or sand to give it some weight. As you get stronger, you can add weight by filling the container more.

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Thursday

I don't have to be out the door right away today, so I've got a little more time for breakfast. I put that time to good use and give myself a midweek breakfast treat. Bacon! Okay, it's turkey bacon—but it's still exciting! Turkey bacon, chicken sausage—these products provide a lot of the great flavors of their fatty cousins but without all the fat. If you can't imagine a world without bacon—and I hear you on this—give one of these alternatives a try sometime. Alongside a runny egg over toast? This is a heavenly breakfast.

Thursday's breakfast: soft-boiled egg on toast with turkey bacon

1 egg, soft boiled for 5 minutes

1 slice whole grain toast

3 slices turkey bacon

1 medium orange, cut into slices

Exercise

Since my morning doesn't start too early, Jeffrey and I have an impromptu dance party on the living room rug before he goes off to school. We bust a few moves to some deep cuts from the 1980s. I love that my son will grow up knowing all the words to *Thriller*.

I'd been hoping to get to a new dance class this afternoon, but the day got away from me; I've got so much to do and squeezing in a workout class just isn't going to happen.

So instead, I text a friend and we make plans to meet in the park for a walk. I add a little extra time to my walk by

actually walking to meet up with her, instead of taking the subway or a cab. We set ourselves a pretty brisk pace and egg each other on when one of us starts to slow down. We also gab the entire time. Our walk—and my workout—is over before I know it. Exercising with a friend can make you work out longer and harder than you might on your own. It’s also more fun than always working out alone!

Thursday’s exercise

A ten-minute dance-off with my boy

A thirty-minute walk (with a five-to-ten-minute bonus warm-up)

On your own: ask a friend to go for a walk or a hike.

At home: dance for fifteen minutes while you’re getting ready for work, or after you get your kids off to school.

My breakfast keeps me pretty full for the morning, so I have a light snack just to make sure my blood sugar doesn’t sag and I don’t get too hungry.

Thursday’s morning snack

1 medium pear

A small handful of nuts

My lunch today is easy, fast, and healthy. Oh, and totally delicious. While not-so-patiently waiting for my breakfast to be ready, I threw some leftovers from last night’s dinner into a to-go bowl. A mixture of quinoa, chopped roasted veggies, and pieces of salmon make a super tasty lunch salad that’s

hearty, and a perfect balance of carbs, protein, and fat. You can eat this straight from the fridge, or you can heat this made-from-leftovers salad in the microwave at work or in a sauté pan at home. It's a perfect lunch.

Thursday's lunch: quinoa, veggie, and salmon salad

½ cup quinoa

1 cup roasted veggies (bell peppers, zucchini, onions)

3 ounces salmon

2 teaspoons salad dressing

My afternoon is a busy one—busier than I expected it to be. A meeting gets moved up, which means my exercise plans change at the last minute, which means I'm off schedule and winging it for the afternoon. You know how it goes. We put stuff on our calendars, we chart our meals and schedule our workouts, and then life actually happens and things just go differently than we planned. I do manage to squeeze some exercise in—a walk with a friend—and we stop for a fruit popsicle at the food truck just outside the park. This is not one of those neon popsicle treats from childhood. It's full of good whole fruit. I've been good this week—there is time for a little indulging!

Thursday's afternoon snack

1 strawberry whole-fruit popsicle

Because it's that kind of day, I get home later than usual on Thursday. The last thing I want to do is hang out in the kitchen cooking for an hour—but I'm hungry; my kid is hungry; my

man is hungry. We gotta eat! This is exactly the situation that would once have sent me running in the direction of a fast-food place or an oversize takeout order. Not tonight. Tonight is all about compromise. A few minutes in the kitchen and we can have a fun, tasty meal that's also right on plan. Nights like this one are perfect for my ten-minute chili. Everybody puts in ten minutes of labor, and we get a delicious, healthy chili.

Here's how it goes. I put Sal to work chopping an onion and a couple of cloves of garlic. I set Jeffrey up with herbs and spices. He pulls the leaves off a sprig of fresh oregano. He "measures" out the cumin and smoky paprika into a bowl. (I handle the chili powder, since that stuff is spicy.) Meanwhile, I take what's left of Tuesday night's pork tenderloin and shred it. It all goes in a big pot, along with the beans I have on hand and a big can of diced tomatoes. By the time we've cleaned ourselves up and set the table, we've got a yummy bean chili with pork for our dinner together.

You could also do this one-pot, one-bowl meal with ground turkey, lean ground pork, or shredded chicken.

Thursday's dinner: chili with beans and shredded pork

1 ½ cups chili

1 tablespoon, about 1 ounce, low-fat cheese

Toasted whole wheat pitas or baked tortilla chips

WEEKDAY TIP FOR THURSDAY: GET YOUR FAMILY INVOLVED

I have enough to do without having to fix different meals for different members of the family. As I've worked to develop these new eating habits, Sal and Jeffrey have been right there with me—trying new foods, cooking and helping in the kitchen, getting out for exercise. I want my family to eat and exercise this way, for their own good health.

Friday

I know I'm going to be going out for dinner tonight—Sal and I have a date! I love our Friday-night dates. Since we're going to an Italian restaurant we both love, I want to be able to indulge just a little bit this evening. That doesn't mean I'm going to skimp on my meals during the day. Far from it. It just means I'm going to make my choices today with that dinner in mind. That way, if something a little naughty catches my eye (I mean something aside from my husband), I'll have given myself the room to go off my diet while sticking to my plan.

I go to one of my standby breakfasts: yogurt with fresh fruit. A plain low-fat yogurt has protein, good carbs, and just the right amount of fat. I add whatever I have on hand: half a banana, chopped apple or pear, a half cup of fresh or frozen mango or peaches (bananas and mangoes are in the mid-range of GI, so I need to watch the quantity). I sprinkle some cinnamon and nuts on top, and I'm a happy camper.

Friday's breakfast: yogurt with fruit and nuts

1 cup low-fat yogurt

¾ cup fresh or frozen fruit

¼ cup sliced almonds or other nuts

Sprinkle of cinnamon

(If you want a little extra sweetness, go ahead and add 1 teaspoon of honey. I find the fruit sweetens this enough for me.)

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WEEKDAY TIP FOR FRIDAY: SPRINKLE ON SOME CINNAMON

Not only is cinnamon a great flavor booster, spicy and aromatic, it also has health benefits. Studies have shown that cinnamon can help lower blood pressure and cholesterol, and that it may help the body use insulin more effectively. I sprinkle cinnamon everywhere—on my cereal, my smoothies, and my yogurt.

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I've got a lot of prep work to do for today's taping, so I spend most of the morning at my desk. Whenever I sit for long stretches of time, I take mini-breaks—two or three minutes maximum, every half hour or so—just to stretch or take a quick walk around the office. Research shows that sitting for extended periods of time is associated with a number of health risks, including cardiovascular problems and larger waist size. (Remember, belly fat is the worst kind of fat you can carry on your body.) Breaking up long stretches of sitting with quick breaks can help guard against these health risks. I'll take any advantage I can get, in terms of protecting my health and my waistline, and this is an easy one to accomplish.

I use one of my breaks to have a snack before we head to the *View* soundstage. It's one of my favorites: fresh melon with

cottage cheese. I know, sounds like classic diet food from the '70s, right? Well, some throwbacks are worth keeping around, and this is one of them. (Also on that distinguished list of throwbacks worth reviving? *The Love Boat* and disco dancing. Who's with me on this?) Mixing sweet and juicy melon chunks with creamy low-fat cottage cheese creates a delicious contrast of flavors and textures. I buy the single-serving containers of cottage cheese, so my portion is already controlled for me, and stir in yummy melon chunks I've either prepared at home or bought pre-cut from the store. I like to sprinkle just a little chili powder over the whole delicious mixture. Yep, chili powder. It's a hit of spice and heat that boosts the flavor of this healthy, low-glycemic snack.

Friday's morning snack

1 cup fresh cantaloupe or other melon

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup low-fat cottage cheese

A dash of chili powder

With my dinner plans in mind, I'm heading for the salad bar today to cover lunch. Navigating the salad bar sounds like an easy, safe thing for a diabetic to do, right? Well, yes and no. There's a lot of good stuff there, but a typical salad bar can get you into trouble if you're not paying attention. Amid all the crunchy, vitamin-rich, low-carb offerings there are some things you want to avoid or have only in small portions. That cottage cheese? It's most definitely full-fat, so if you have any, make it a small helping, not a giant one. Those crunchy rice sticks or crispy croutons? It's too hard for me to eat just a few of these starchy, salty salad add-ons, so I just skip 'em

altogether and opt for a small wheat roll or some rye crackers instead. In addition to the bottled and packaged dressings that are available, most salad bars also have bottles of oil and vinegar on hand. I use these to dress my salad—this way, I can control my portion and avoid the sugars, fats, and salt that often lurk in processed dressings.

Friday's lunch: salad bar salad

2 cups salad greens and raw veggies

½ cup bean salad

1 hard-boiled egg

1 tablespoon salad dressing—a careful splash of olive oil and red wine vinegar

4 rye crackers

I'm racing around on Friday afternoon, so I need a snack that can travel. Instead of hitting up the vending machine, I grab some of my handy fruit-and-nut mixture to go.

Friday's afternoon snack

⅓ cup homemade fruit-and-nut mix

Exercise

Friday is my last gym workout of the week. I try not to do the same thing at the gym every time I go. I get bored easily. Plus, giving your body new challenges is important for your long-term success in getting fit and losing weight. If you do the same workout for the same amount of time every day, not only will you be bored, but your workouts will also become less effective. As you become fit, you'll have to work less hard to achieve the same results. The fifteen-minute walk on the

treadmill that used to make you wheeze and sweat now feels pretty manageable? That's a sign it's time to switch things up. Changing aspects of your workout—adding time to that treadmill session, alternating cycling with a Zumba class—can help keep you working hard and burning calories. What's more, if you're doing a single exercise routine over and over again, you're working the same sets of muscles in the same way, every time—and missing out on working others. Varying your routine allows you to work different muscle combinations and provides other muscles time to rest and recover, improving your whole-body fitness.

So today, instead of a cardio-strength combination, I take an afternoon spin class. This class is a blast—and a seriously challenging workout! It relies on the interval training that is so important in boosting fitness and metabolism.

Friday's workout

Thirty-minute spin class at the gym

On your own: ride the stationary bike at the gym for fifteen to thirty minutes. Include an interval—a short burst of speed—every five minutes.

At home: go for a bike ride! Go with your kids, a friend, or on your own. Every five minutes, pick up your pace to get the benefits of interval training.

WEEKDAY TIP FOR FRIDAY: DEVELOP A DRINKING HABIT

As you know by now, I only drink water. I think in many ways, water saved my life. I drink water instead of diet soda. I drink water instead of piña coladas. I drink water, period. So try it for two weeks. Commit to drinking just water and see how good you feel!

Date night has arrived! I've been looking forward to some quiet, grown-up time with my man all week long. We head out to one of our favorite neighborhood restaurants, the kind of place where the owner comes out to say hello and greets her regulars by name. This place has delicious food, a cozy atmosphere, and no fuss.

Sal and I share one of our favorite appetizers—grilled calamari. I order a marinated mushroom salad—mushrooms are a really flavorful food, and when a chef knows how to cook 'em right, like this one does, they are something special. I'm tempted by the pasta dishes—of course. Pasta was one of the foods that I was once powerless to resist. I've learned that it's easier to avoid certain foods altogether than to try to manage them. I can handle a few noodles in my soup, but a whole dish of pasta? That's too much for me. I spot a small plate of crab cakes—perfect! I eat them happily and don't miss that pasta one bit. I especially don't miss feeling heavy, bloated, and tired after my meal with my husband. Romance is alive!

Friday night's dinner

Grilled calamari

Mushroom salad

Crab cakes

If you're in a staying-in kind of mood, try lightening up one of your favorite restaurant or takeout favorites with an at-home version. In Chapter 10, you'll see how to re-create some of your favorite dishes so they're friendly to your waistline and your blood sugar.

Saturday

Weekends are family time for me. I do have to work on plenty of weekends—when I was doing *Dancing with the Stars*, I was in Los Angeles every weekend for rehearsals. I try to have Jeffrey and Sal with me if I can. Sometimes, that doesn't work. But my ideal weekend is a family one: at home, in NYC, with two days to play. We get a lot of exercise just being active. I also make a point to designate some exercise time for just me on at least one weekend day. It feels good, and it gives me flexibility for the rest of the week if something comes up and I can't make a scheduled workout.

Our Saturday breakfast is one designed to get us going and out the door for some fun. Cereal isn't a forbidden food: it's just the high-sugar cereals you want to avoid. My new passion in the morning? Oatmeal. I put berries on oatmeal, cinnamon, raisins, bananas—anything I want! Oatmeal is low-fat and high-fiber, and keeps me satisfied all morning.

Saturday's breakfast: oatmeal with berries and banana

1 cup steel-cut oatmeal

1 cup low-fat or skim milk

½ cup fresh or frozen berries

½ banana

We're headed to the beach today, and we'll plan to eat lunch at the boardwalk. I pack some snacks so that nobody gets too hungry and starts begging for a cotton candy or a funnel cake. You think I'm talking about my seven-year-old? Nope. That'd be me doing the begging, if I don't plan ahead. I pack some individual servings of low-fat cheese, fruit, and baked tortilla chips, and we're ready to hit the surf!

Saturday's morning snack

1 ounce low-fat cheese

1 medium apple

Exercise

When I have a whole day to spend with my family, there's no way I'm cutting into it by going to the gym. Of course, if you need a break from those crazy people you love, going to the gym can be the perfect mini-getaway! Sal, Jeffrey, and I like to get out of the house and go places on our Saturdays. We also like to veg out and hang around, so we do some of that, too. It's all about balance. This Saturday at the beach is a family activity that is full of built-in exercise: we play around in the sand, we run in and out of the crashing waves, we walk for long stretches along the shoreline and the boardwalk nearby.

Saturday's exercise

Playing with my family at the beach

On your own/at home: spend thirty minutes doing a family activity. Play at the park, go swimming at the local pool, go for a hike or a walk in the woods.

Eating out isn't always easy. Especially when you're faced with the kind of temptation that lines the boardwalk at the beach, or exists on the menu of your favorite fast-food place. You can make it work for you; you've just got to be smart. Don't let yourself get too hungry. Keep your portions in control. Share treats with your companions. That's what we do when we stop horsing around on the beach long enough to walk over for lunch. Sal, Jeffrey, and I split an order of French fries. That way, we all get a little of this indulgence without going overboard. Sal and I are having guests for dinner later tonight, and we're serving them beef, so no hamburger for me today. I order a turkey burger, with a few simple modifications. I ask them to hold the cheese and the mayo, and request extra tomato and lettuce. I also compromise on the bread and eat my burger with the just the bottom half of the bun. We chomp away, happy as three clams to be sharing lunch on a sunny day.

Saturday's lunch: turkey burger

A turkey burger on half a bun

A few French fries

After lunch we take a walk on the beach, before packing up our gear to head back home. On the car ride back to the city,

I munch on an apple and bask in the feeling of having my son nap against my shoulder. *Thank you, Lord.*

Saturday's afternoon snack

1 medium apple

Sal and I are having a few friends over for dinner, so after we get home we both start getting ready. We're grilling steak—well, Sal is doing the grilling. That man loves to wave a spatula over a hot flame. We don't have beef a lot, but we do include it in our diet—just in smaller portions than we used to. While Sal is prepping the meat for the grill, I cook some brown rice and make a green salad that's full of fresh veggies from the local market. I'll add some fresh herbs to the rice and dress it with the same olive oil and vinegar dressing that I'm using for the salad. This is an easy way to give your basic grain dish some tang and flavor!

I stopped by a local bakery on my way home from work Friday and picked up a small dark chocolate cake for dessert. It's like I told you right from the start: I still eat dessert! I just don't eat a whole dessert platter anymore. This rich, dense cake is a treat we'll share with our guests—and I'll send them home with the leftover cake, so I don't have it around to tempt me.

Saturday's dinner: grilled rib-eye steak with herbed brown rice and green salad . . . and chocolate cake!

3 ounces rib-eye

½ cup herbed brown rice

2 cups green salad

2 teaspoons olive oil and vinegar dressing, plus what's in the rice

1 small slice chocolate cake

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WEEKDAY TIP FOR SATURDAY: MAKE YOUR INDULGENCES COUNT

I had a few opportunities to indulge in sweets this week—including those cookies at the office and that tasty popsicle from the frozen food truck outside the park. Both times, I said no to the most indulgent treat and found a healthier alternative. Saturday night, I let myself have a really delicious, really well-made piece of cake. It tasted great and I shared it with friends I love. This is a far cry from the lonely bingeing I used to do. It's important to learn how to say no to rich, sweet, and fatty foods. It's also important to learn how to say yes, occasionally. Pick your time and place—and your food, too!

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Exercise

Since we're having people over for dinner, I spend a half hour or so cleaning around the house in the afternoon. I put some music on and dance while I'm cleaning. I stop every couple of minutes to do some basic strength-training exercises: squats and lunges, bicep curls and shoulder presses. Once you learn some basic strength-training moves, you can add them to almost any activity or workout.

On your own/at home: find an everyday activity you can combine with strength training—yard work or gardening, housecleaning, grocery shopping (lift those bags!).

Sunday

On Sundays, we sleep in. Or at least we try to! With a little boy in the house who jumps out of bed and hits the ground running, it's not always easy. Actually, Jeffrey's pretty good—if he wakes up before seven thirty, he turns on the TV and watches some early-morning cartoons. But after seven thirty, forget it! We're up.

We like to leave our Sundays open, time for hanging as a family and taking it easy. Our day is mostly built around church. We like to go out for a late breakfast/early lunch after church, and this midday meal makes the way I eat on Sundays a little bit different from other days.

Even though we're going to be having brunch, I don't want to wait until then to eat something. That would be bad for my blood sugar and dangerous for my appetite and eating choices. Remember, it's important not to let yourself get too hungry! I think I'll probably want to eat eggs at brunch, so I head in another direction for my small, early-morning snack. Yogurt with a little whole grain cereal and a few strawberries mixed in is the perfect get-me-going mini-breakfast to tide me over until our after-church brunch.

Sunday's mini-breakfast: yogurt with cereal and fruit

1 cup no-fat plain yogurt

¼ cup whole grain, low-sugar cereal

½ cup fresh or frozen berries

Sal, Jeffrey, and I walk from church over to our favorite brunch place. It helps when you're eating out to have a few

places that are familiar to you—you know the menu and what offerings will work within your plan and what modifications they are willing to make if you ask. Our regular brunch spot is famous for its omelets—they're big and stuffed with goodies. A little too big, and a little too stuffed for me. That much food will tire me out for the rest of the day and will send my blood sugar up, up, up. So what do I do? I order an omelet, of course!

Now wait. I make a few requests that lighten up my omelet considerably. I ask for an egg-white omelet instead of a whole-egg omelet. I have them hold the home fries—that one's tough, but it's worth it! I choose an omelet that is full of cooked vegetables and ask them to use half the amount of cheese they normally would. I add an order of vegetarian sausage. If you've never tried it, you should! It's full of good-for-you lean protein, and it tastes pretty darn good! And this comes from a woman who thought pork sausage was a basic food group.

Sunday's brunch: mushroom-and-spinach omelet, with vegetarian sausage and fruit salad

1 egg-white omelet with mushrooms, spinach, and cheese

3 links vegetarian sausage

⅓ cup fresh fruit salad

We make our way home after brunch and settle in for some relaxing. We love our lazy Sunday afternoons! I'll do some prep for the week later in the day, including some simple cooking that will give me a head start on next week. But first,

I chill out. Read a magazine; play a game with Jeffrey. Noodle around on the computer and definitely check in with my Twitter folks. If I'm feeling motivated, I might do a little yoga or pop in a Pilates workout DVD for some at-home exercise. But I don't push it. Giving yourself downtime is important to your long-term success—you can't just go, go, go all the time without a break. You'll increase your chances of sticking with your routine if you build in time to relax.

Brunch was a pretty big meal, and we eat dinner on the early side on Sundays, so I have a light snack in the middle of the afternoon, just to tide me over and keep me from getting too hungry.

Sunday's afternoon snack

¼ cup hummus

1 carrot, cut into pieces

Sunday dinner is a pretty simple, quiet affair in our house. I don't want to spend my afternoon in the kitchen; I'd rather be loafing around with Sal and Jeffrey on the couch, and maybe heading over to the park in the afternoon if it's nice outside. This Sunday I make my time count twice: I roast a chicken for us for dinner and roast a second one to have on hand for the week ahead. I roast some vegetables alongside the chickens, so we'll have that with with some leftover herbed rice from last night's dinner. It's a simple, satisfying meal to finish off a fun, relaxing weekend.

Sunday's dinner: roast chicken with broccoli, cauliflower, and herbed rice

3 ounces chicken, skin removed

½ cup herbed rice

1 cup roasted broccoli and cauliflower

Green salad

Exercise

If Saturdays are a high-activity day for my family, Sundays are just the opposite. On Sundays we keep things pretty low-key and open. The one thing we know we'll be doing, wherever we are? Going to church as a family. But other than that, we like to see what the day brings. Having exercised all week, I can keep this day open to whatever comes, without feeling guilty. I might do a little yoga or stretching, or pop in a Pilates DVD.

We eat dinner a little earlier on Sundays than the rest of the week, and that leads to another Sunday tradition: an after-dinner walk. Unless the weather's really bad, Sal, Jeffrey, and I will take a walk after dinner on most Sundays. (If the weather is bad, we'll huddle up and play a board game!) It's a lovely way to end one week and look forward to the next: with the two people I love most in the world.

Sunday's exercise

A walk around the neighborhood with my family

At home/on your own: spend fifteen minutes doing some gentle, easy activity. Stretch,

practice a little yoga, putter in your garden, walk your dog around the block. Whatever you do, be grateful for all that's good in your life—including the way you're working to get healthy!

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**WEEKDAY TIP FOR SUNDAY:
BE THANKFUL FOR THE GIFTS
IN YOUR LIFE**

Practicing gratitude feels good, and it helps to keep you healthy.

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INDULGING SMART: HOW TO EAT FAST FOOD

Eat a salad and a small treat.

Most every fast-food place has a salad or fresh-vegetable option. So take advantage of it. Fill up on this stuff and leave a little room on your tray for indulging.

Hold the special sauces and the mayo.

Keeping the extra goo off your pasta and meat will help control calories, fat, and hidden sugars. Stick with the veggie toppings—lettuces, onion, tomato.

Don't supersize.

Do I need to say this? I probably do. I certainly needed to hear it when I was first making changes to my diet. Keep your fast-food indulgences small (in portion size) and rare (in frequency) and you can get away with the occasional pass through the drive-thru lane.

Skip the soda.

Part of indulging smart is learning how to compromise. Say yes to a small treat from your favorite fast-food place, but drink water instead of soda. You'll spare yourself all that sugar and all those empty calories.

INDULGING SMART: HOW TO DRINK ALCOHOL

I was never much of a drinker, even before my diagnosis. So this was one habit I didn't have to break. But I know people who love their glass of wine at night. If that sounds like you . . .

Talk to your doctor.

A safe decision about whether you should drink can only be made with your doctor. Alcohol can cause low blood sugar; it also can interfere with diabetes medications. The easiest thing is to skip booze altogether. If you're thinking about drinking, have an honest conversation with your doctor and listen to his or her advice.

Make it occasional, not every day.

Even if you get the okay from your doc to have a drink, it's important to keep it an occasional indulgence, not an everyday ritual. In addition to its effects on your blood sugar, drinking regularly will make it a lot harder to lose weight. If you decide to drink, stick to special occasions.

Stick to one, and sip.

Order a drink you really like and make it last. If you're out for a long night of socializing, after you've had your one, switch to club soda and lemon, or seltzer with lime. You'll still have something to drink and hold in your hand. The only thing you'll be without is a headache the next day.

Eat while you drink.

Drinking on an empty stomach is never a good idea, especially for a diabetic. Having a drink with food will slow the absorption of alcohol into your bloodstream and lessen its impact on your blood sugar. If you're planning to

have a drink someplace and you're not sure if there will be food, then eat before you go out.

Hold the sugar.

Stay away from those fruity, slushy drinks that are full of extra sugar. I'm talking margaritas, daiquiris, and the like. Here's a quick rule of thumb: if it comes with an umbrella, it's probably not your best choice. Also, use alternatives to mixers like fruit juice and soda. Try club soda or seltzer instead of cola or juice.

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My Secret Weapons

When it came to changing my diet, I was afraid food would never taste as good as it had when I ate whatever I wanted. I was wrong—really wrong—about that. Looking back, I realize I didn't really taste much at all back in those days. I could pack away enormous amounts of food, but I didn't stop to taste much of it.

My eating habits before my diabetes diagnosis were about a lot of things—including a stubborn, dangerous compulsion to eat whether I was hungry or not. But one thing they weren't much about? How food tasted. Oh, sure, I loved the salty blast that hit my tongue when I ate fried foods, or the sugary shot that came from eating sweets. But beyond that? I didn't think much about flavor or texture. And even if I had, I was wolfing too quickly to find out much about how my food tasted.

Now I think about flavor all the time, when I'm making food for myself and when I'm ordering out at a restaurant. Not relying on fat, salt, and sugar has opened my mind—and exposed my taste buds—to a whole range of flavors that make my healthy eating interesting and satisfying. I have an ever-

growing tool kit of strategies to maximize the flavor of my food, without adding sugar or fat or lots of extra salt. I think of them as my secret weapons in the kitchen!

Sesame oil

This nut oil is potent stuff! Not only does it have a deep, rich taste of sesame, but it also has been shown to help lower blood pressure. I use sesame oil regularly. It's a cooking base for vegetables and lean meats. It's a great addition to salad dressing. Do you love the flavor of that sauce-drenched sesame chicken from your local Chinese takeout? Try using a little bit of toasted sesame oil on a veggie stir-fry.

Fresh herbs

I keep a jar full of fresh herbs in my refrigerator, so I always have some on hand. Fresh herbs are full of flavor. I use them in cooked foods and fresh foods, in desserts, and even in my tea! They're easy to experiment with—just grab a few leaves and toss them in whatever you're making. I love to use rosemary and oregano when I'm cooking beans. I add thyme to my tomato soup. I toss parsley and dill into a fresh salad—or salad dressing. I even brew my tea with a sprig of mint!

Citrus

Who knew you could use every part of an orange? I didn't. But I do now. My fruit drawer is overflowing with citrus. I keep lemons and limes, oranges and grapefruit. I peel an orange and eat it, of course. But I also cut lemon slices and drop them in my water and my tea. I squeeze the juice of a lime and add it to chopped-up tomatoes and onions for a quick salsa. I grate

citrus zest—that’s the colored part of the skin—into fresh salads or salad dressing. These bright citrus flavors are a great, healthy way to perk up your taste buds.

Mushrooms

As a kid I was never a mushroom eater. I thought they looked weird, and I was sure they tasted terrible. This I just *knew*, without ever actually tasting one. It took me until middle age, but I’ve finally come around to mushrooms, in a big way. Mushrooms add a deep, almost meaty flavor to dishes. If you’re a meat lover who’s trying to cut down, mushrooms are your friend. I scramble them with eggs, or I sauté them with lots of fresh herbs and toss them with quinoa. I stuff them with roasted veggies in a whole wheat pita for a delicious, portable lunch.

Low-fat or no-fat Greek yogurt

There’s a Greek yogurt cult forming, and I’m a proud, head-bobbing member. If you’ve never tried it, you’re in for a treat. It’s richer than regular yogurt, and thicker and creamier, too. I eat this yummy yogurt with fruit for breakfast and for dessert. But it’s not just good with sweet stuff. I also mix Greek yogurt with fresh herbs and garlic for a delicious, healthy dip. I use that same stuff on my dinner plate as a topping for fish or chicken.

Hey, Lighten Up!

Just because you’re giving up the mongo-sized servings of takeout and frequent trips to the pizza place doesn’t mean you have to let go of your favorite dishes. With a little creativity

in the kitchen and some portion control on your plate, you can still have lighter, healthier versions of some of your favorite meals. Here are a few of mine, along with suggestions for lightening things up.

Meatloaf

Oh, meatloaf. The baked brick of meaty goodness that takes me back to childhood. All that red meat and fat has got to go, but meatloaf itself can stick around in a new form. Swap out ground beef for ground turkey and you've got a much lighter, waistline-friendly version. Instead of serving this with mashed potatoes, try cooking up some flavorful dark greens, like collards or spinach, to go alongside. Another low-glycemic side dish that's a tasty alternative to potatoes? Steamed, mashed cauliflower. Trust me, this is a rich, hearty, and flavorful dish that will make you forget all about those starchy spuds.

Chinese takeout

I used to grab takeout from my favorite Chinese place at least a couple of times a week. I've stopped that habit—but luckily for my taste buds, I've replaced it with a new one. I cook up a bunch of broccoli with lots of garlic and toss it with a little leftover chicken or pork. Low-sodium soy sauce, a couple drops of sesame oil, and the whole thing goes over brown rice. Heavenly. And good for me.

Pizza

Instead of ordering a pie the size of Rhode Island, try making your own healthy versions at home. Toast whole grain pita or

flatbread to make a crisp crust, then spread some fresh tomatoes, or tomato sauce and lots of veggies. Top with low-fat cheese and pop that baby in the oven. Add a little fresh—or dried—oregano for that pizza-parlor flavor!

Mac and cheese

This is a tough one, right? Not if you're willing to swap out pasta for a whole grain like brown rice or barley for a cheesy, hearty casserole that's just as comforting as your old mac 'n' cheese standby. Instead of mixing pasta with a mountain of cheese, try using rice with a whole bunch of vegetables—I love to use spinach, onions, and mushrooms—and some low-fat mozzarella. Bake the whole delicious mess in the oven just like you would your old version, until it's bubbling, and prepare to enjoy!

Burgers

Swap out the all-beef patty for a turkey burger. Try a salmon burger or a veggie burger. Use half a whole grain bun, and pile the veggies high on top.

INDULGING SMART: GOOD-FOR-YOU FRUIT DESSERTS

Yogurt with fresh berries

Plain, low-fat Greek yogurt tastes incredibly rich and creamy. It's also full of protein and low in sugar. Stir in your favorite berries. If you're in the mood for a little crunch, sprinkle in a little whole grain cereal.

Frozen fruit shake

I keep bananas in the freezer just for this purpose. Zap a half of a banana in the blender with a splash of low-fat milk or soy milk, for a tasty frozen treat.

Whole-fruit popsicles

You can find brands with no added sugar at your supermarket. They're tart and sweet and taste like summer. Grab one instead of ice cream for a hot-weather treat.

Fruit and cheese

Ooh la la! This not-too-sweet dessert is the perfect combination of high-fiber carb and protein. An apple or pear with a few pieces of cheddar or goat cheese is a filling—and very French—way to end a meal.

This eating and exercise plan is meant to last you a lifetime. It is about making you feel well inside and out, keeping your prediabetes or diabetes at bay, and giving you a new sense of wonder for all that you can be. Enjoy!