

Chapter 11

Normal Nutrition



Some knowledge of normal nutrition helps when working with the dietitian on a diabetes food plan.

The foods we eat are divided into:

- proteins
- carbohydrates (includes all sugars)
- fats
- vitamins and minerals
- water
- fiber

All of these are important for our bodies and are discussed in more detail in *“Understanding Diabetes.”*

Insulin has its main effect on sugars. It is important to eat high-sugar foods only when there is enough insulin acting in the body.

It used to be thought that simple sugars (e.g., candy) were quickly absorbed in the stomach and complex sugars (e.g., starch) were slowly absorbed. This is now known

NOT to be true. All carbohydrates are used at the same rate so they increase blood sugars in the same way.

Remember, **“a carbohydrate is a carbohydrate is a carbohydrate...”**

It is more important to think about the following:

- **WHEN** carbohydrate is eaten.
(Do not constantly snack between meals, or else blood sugars will be high.)
- **HOW MUCH** carbohydrate is eaten.
(A can of sugar pop has 10 teaspoons of sugar and is a “load” for anyone.)
- **WITH WHAT** the carbohydrate is eaten.
(Other foods, such as fat, slow the sugar absorption.)
- **IF INSULIN IS ACTING** at the same time the sugar is eaten, which allows the carbohydrate to pass into cells for energy (see Chapter 2).

Other thoughts discussed in Chapter 11 of *“Understanding Diabetes”* are:

- Working with the dietitian helps families keep up-to-date on new dietary ideas.
- Learning to read nutrition labels on foods at the store is very important.
- Having a normal level of blood fats (e.g., cholesterol) is important for people with diabetes. These levels can be tested once yearly at a clinic visit.

Eating nutritious foods will help all family members.

