



Thames Valley

Family Health Team

Sweet Talk: Managing Your Blood Sugars

Presented by:

Registered Dietitians and Nurses
at Thames Valley Family Health Team

This information is presented by Thames Valley Family Health Team health professionals and was developed based on the most up-to-date research.

We respect that everyone's journey is unique. Your health, history, and circumstances are all different.

If you have questions after attending one of our groups or viewing one of our videos, please reach out to a health professional.

If you do not have a nurse practitioner or family doctor, call 811 or visit <https://health811.ontario.ca/>.

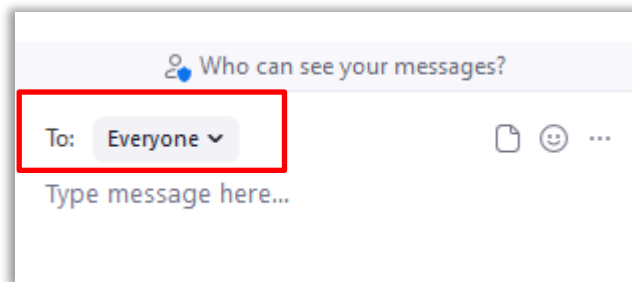


Housekeeping

- Please keep yourself muted during the presentation.
- To ask a question, please use the Chat feature (found in the toolbar at the bottom; will open on right side of window).



- You can pose a question to the whole group or only to the facilitators by selecting your preference in the dropdown menu. We will answer your questions at the end of the presentation.



Zoom Manners



- » Please be gentle with each other
- » Please use headphones for privacy reasons, if possible
- » Please turn your camera on when in session
- » Please mute your microphone if not speaking
- » Please do not use “chat” space for anything not related to the group
- » Please share the airtime with others; we have time for questions and comments in group



Group Guidelines

- **Respect** – Please be respectful when others are speaking and remain open to multiple perspectives.
- **Sensitivity and Inclusivity** – Let's work together to ensure that all participants experience this group as a supportive and positive space.
- **Confidentiality** – Please don't share personal details about other group participants.

Group Handouts

- Throughout the presentation, you may see this symbol which indicates that you have either a specific handout or link related to that topic.



= Handout

Why are you here?



Outline

- Prediabetes vs. Diabetes
- Risk Factors
- Healthy Eating
- Physical Activity
- Medications
- Mental Health
- Goal Setting



What Is Prediabetes?

- When your blood sugar levels are higher than "normal", but not high enough to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes
- Remember! Not everyone with prediabetes will develop type 2 diabetes



What is Diabetes (Type 2)?

- When there is a lack of insulin and/or insulin does not function properly causing an elevation of blood sugar above normal levels
- You can have prediabetes or undiagnosed Type 2 diabetes without having any obvious warning signs
- Presently there is no cure for diabetes



How does your body normally absorb sugar?

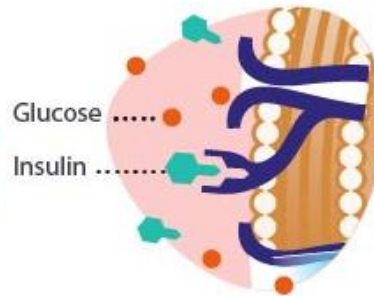
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Food we eat becomes glucose and enters our bloodstream. Blood glucose level goes up.



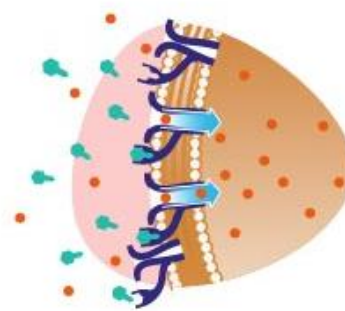
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Insulin, a hormone made by the pancreas, acts as a key to unlock body cells and let in glucose.



3

Glucose leaves the bloodstream and enters cells. Blood glucose level returns to normal.



4

Cells turn glucose into energy.



Source: Health Hub 2025. Diabetes Pocket Guide.
<https://www.healthhub.sg/a-z/diseases-and-conditions/pocket-guide-to-diabetes>

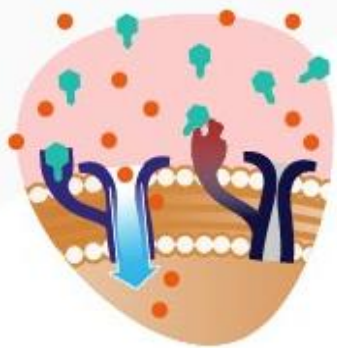


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What makes blood sugar rise?

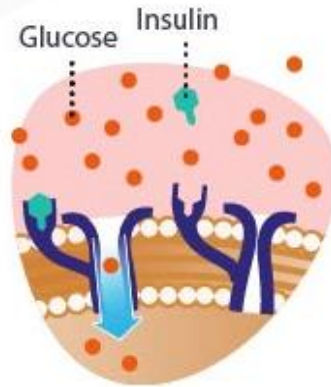
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Type 2 diabetes happens when:



a) our body cells become resistant to insulin (keys do not work on locks)

and/or



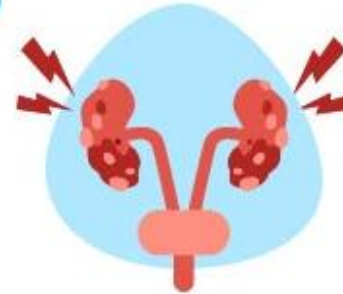
b) our pancreas does not make enough insulin (not enough keys to unlock)

2



In both cases, glucose cannot enter our body cells, and instead builds up in the bloodstream, resulting in high blood glucose.

3



Over time, constantly high blood glucose levels can damage blood vessels and organs — so it's important for people with diabetes to control their glucose levels.



Source: Health Hub 2025. Diabetes Pocket Guide.
<https://www.healthhub.sg/a-z/diseases-and-conditions/pocket-guide-to-diabetes>



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What do my numbers mean?

	Normal	Prediabetes	Diabetes
Fasting Blood Glucose (sugar level after not eating)	In the range of 3.6 to 6.0 mmol/L	In the range of 6.1 to 6.9 mmol/L (IFG)	7 mmol/L or higher (IFG)
Oral Glucose Tolerance Test (sugar level 2 hours after a sugar drink)	Less than 7.8 mmol/L	In the range of 7.8 to 11.0 mmol/L (IGT)	11.1 mmol/L or higher (IGT)
Hemoglobin A1c (sugar on blood cells)	Less than 6%	In the range of 6.0 to 6.4%	6.5% or higher

IFG – Impaired fasting sugar, IGT – Impaired sugar tolerance



What happens when blood sugars are high over time?

What I might feel...

- Blurred vision
- Pain and numbness in feet and fingers
- Sexual difficulties
- Low energy
- Irritability
- Increased infections and slow healing
- Frequent urination and thirst

Possible health problems from diabetes...

- Blindness
- Nerve damage
- Kidney damage
- Heart attacks, heart disease and strokes
- Amputations



What Led To This?

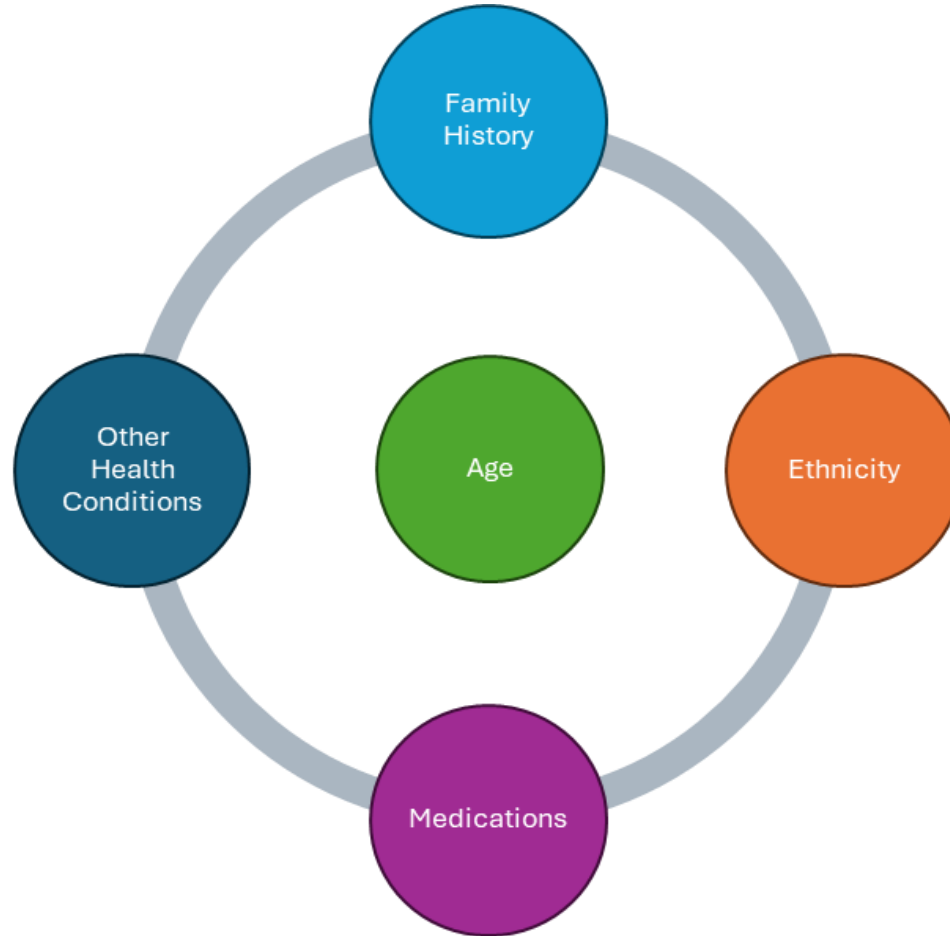
Uncontrollable



Controllable



What are the risk factors I can't control?



Source: Diabetes Canada. Risk Factors for Type 2 Diabetes.
www.diabetes.ca/en-CA/type-2-risks/risk-factors-assessments



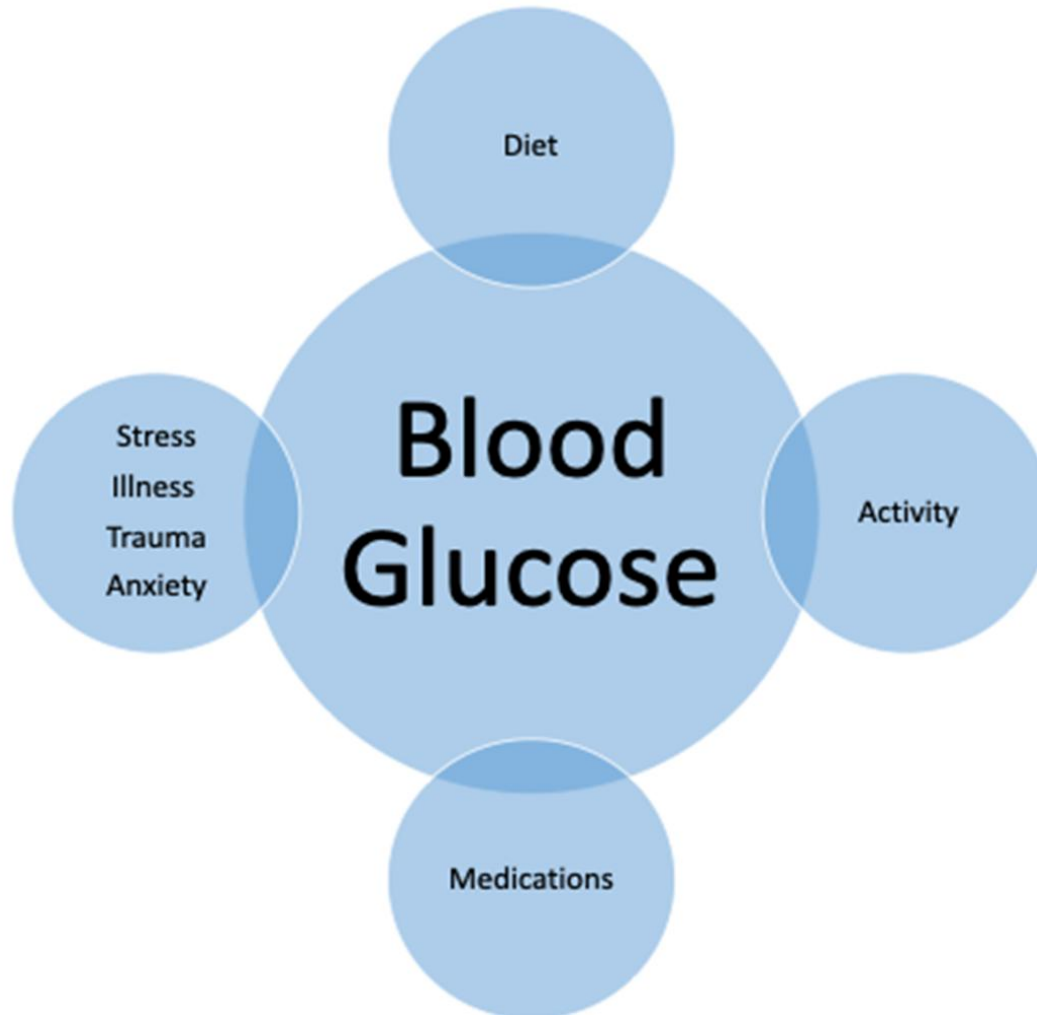
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What are the risk factors I can control?

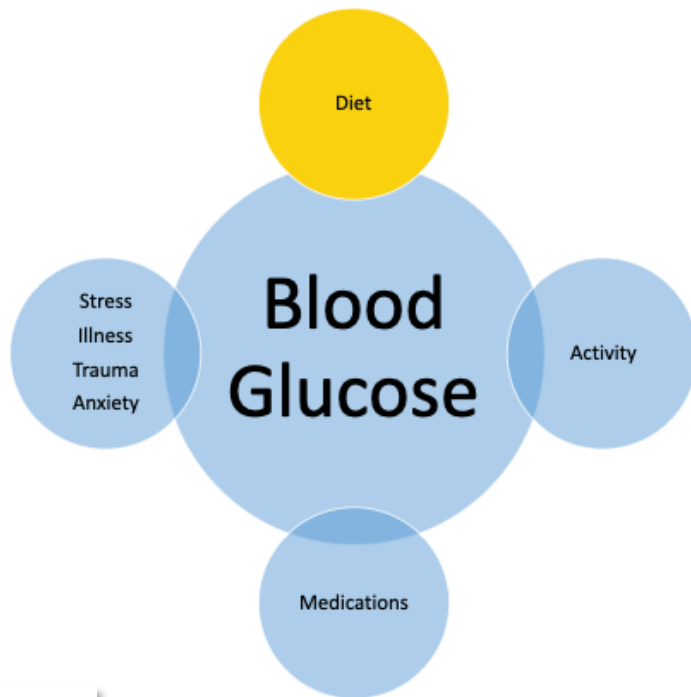
- Activity level
- Food choices
- Blood pressure
- Cholesterol
- Smoking
- Stress management
- Sleep habits



Fundamentals for Blood Sugar Control



Healthy Eating for Blood Sugar Control



- Meal Spacing
- Sugar and Sweets
- Processed Foods
- Fibre
- Fluids
- Alcohol
- Carbohydrates
- Balance
- Glycemic Index
- Label Reading



Healthy Eating: *Meal Spacing*

<i>Tip</i>	<i>Reason</i>
Eat 3 meals per day at regular times and space meals no more than six hours apart. You may benefit from a healthy snack.	Eating at regular times helps your body control blood sugar levels.

- Regularity of dietary intake can also support good appetite control & may help with weight management.



Healthy Eating: *Limit Sugars & Sweets*

<i>Tip</i>	<i>Reason</i>
Limit sugars and sweets such as sugar, regular pop, desserts, candies, jam and honey.	The more sugar you eat, the higher your blood sugar will be. Artificial sweeteners can be useful.

- Can be natural/organic = sugar
- Estimates are that at least a third of processed foods have added sugars



Healthy Eating: *Processed Foods*

Tip

Limit the amount of fried and processed foods you eat.



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Reason

These foods don't contain many nutrients or blood sugar friendly fibre.

Because diabetes puts us at a higher risk for heart disease, limit these foods to keep your heart healthy as well.



Healthy Eating: *Fibre!*

<i>Tip</i>	<i>Reason</i>
Eat more high-fibre foods such as whole grain breads and cereals, lentils, dried beans/peas, brown rice, vegetables and fruits.	Foods high in fibre help you feel full and lower blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

- Only 1/10 Canadian adults meet fibre targets
 - Women: 21-25 g/day
 - Men: 30-38 g/day
- Fibre does not raise blood sugar levels!



Healthy Eating: *Fluids*

<i>Tip</i>	<i>Reason</i>
If you are thirsty, drink water.	Drinking regular pop & sports drinks, fruit juice, lemonade, iced tea, or any sweetened coffee drink will raise your blood sugar.

- Eat whole fruit instead of fruit juices
- How much fluid do you need?

9 cups/day (women) / 12 cups/day (men)



Healthy Eating: *Alcohol*

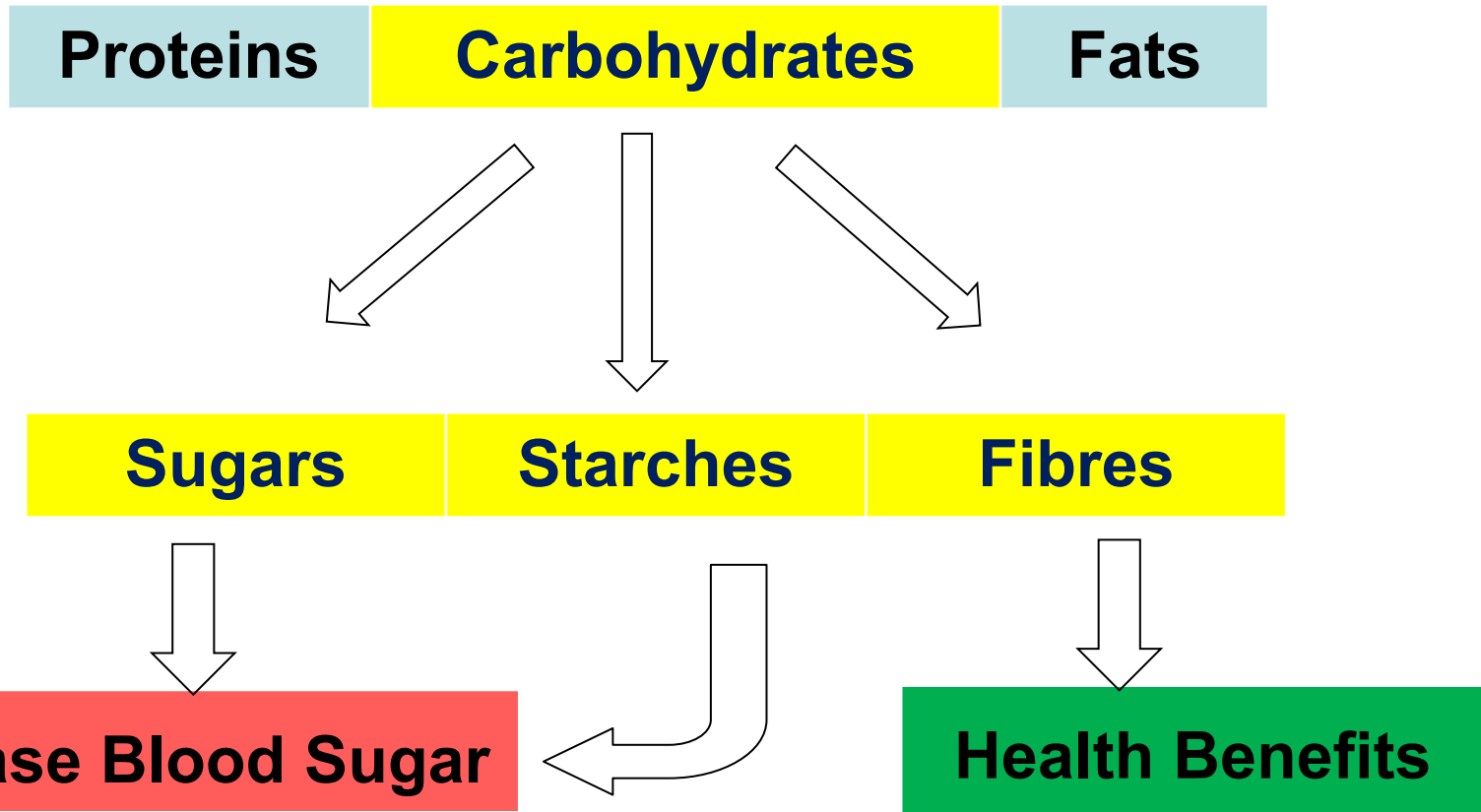
<i>Tip</i>	<i>Reason</i>
Limit alcohol consumption.	Alcohol can affect blood sugar levels and cause weight gain.

New Canadian Alcohol Guidelines

- Low risk is considered 2 drinks or less a week
- Moderate is considered less than 6 drinks a week
- 7 drinks & above is considered higher risk (heart disease and certain cancers risk increase with higher intake)



Healthy Eating: Carbohydrates



SAMPLE MENU ACTIVITY

*Can you pick out the
foods that
will raise your blood
sugar?*



Identify the Carbs

Breakfast

- Hot cereal
- Whole wheat toast
- Natural peanut butter
- Natural orange juice
- Low-fat yogurt



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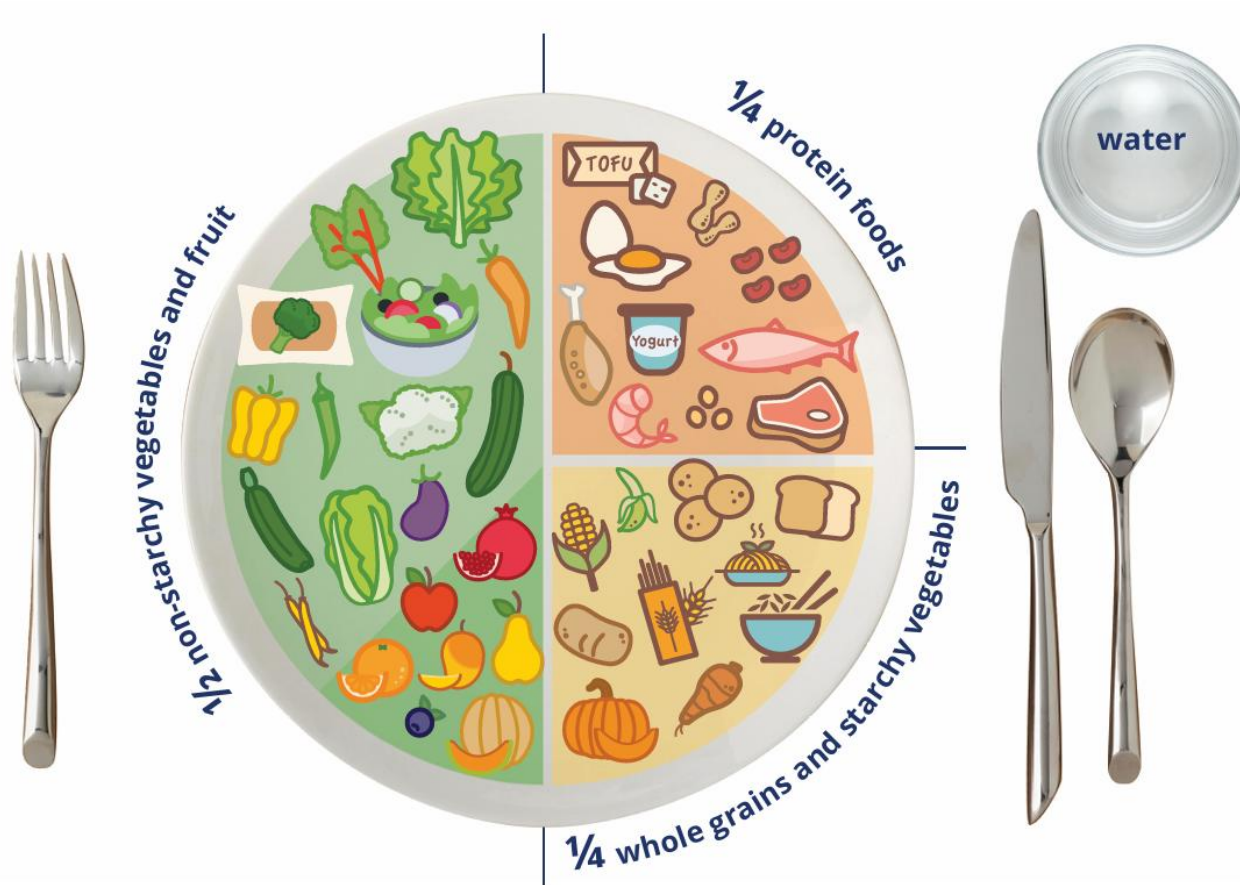


Balance / Portions



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Balanced Food Plate



Source: The Balanced Food Plate 2021. Diabetes Canada.
<https://www.diabetes.ca>



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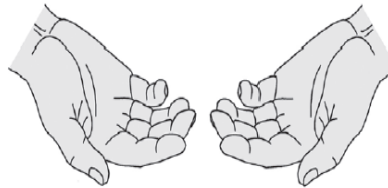
Handy portion guide

Your hands can be very useful in estimating appropriate portions. When planning a meal, use the following portion sizes as a guide:



FRUITS*/GRAINS & STARCHES*:

Choose an amount the size of your fist for each of Grains and Starches, and Fruit.



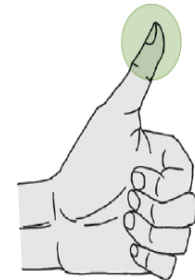
VEGETABLES*:

Choose as much as you can hold in both hands.



MEAT & ALTERNATIVES*:

Choose an amount up to the size of the palm of your hand and the thickness of your little finger.



FATS*:

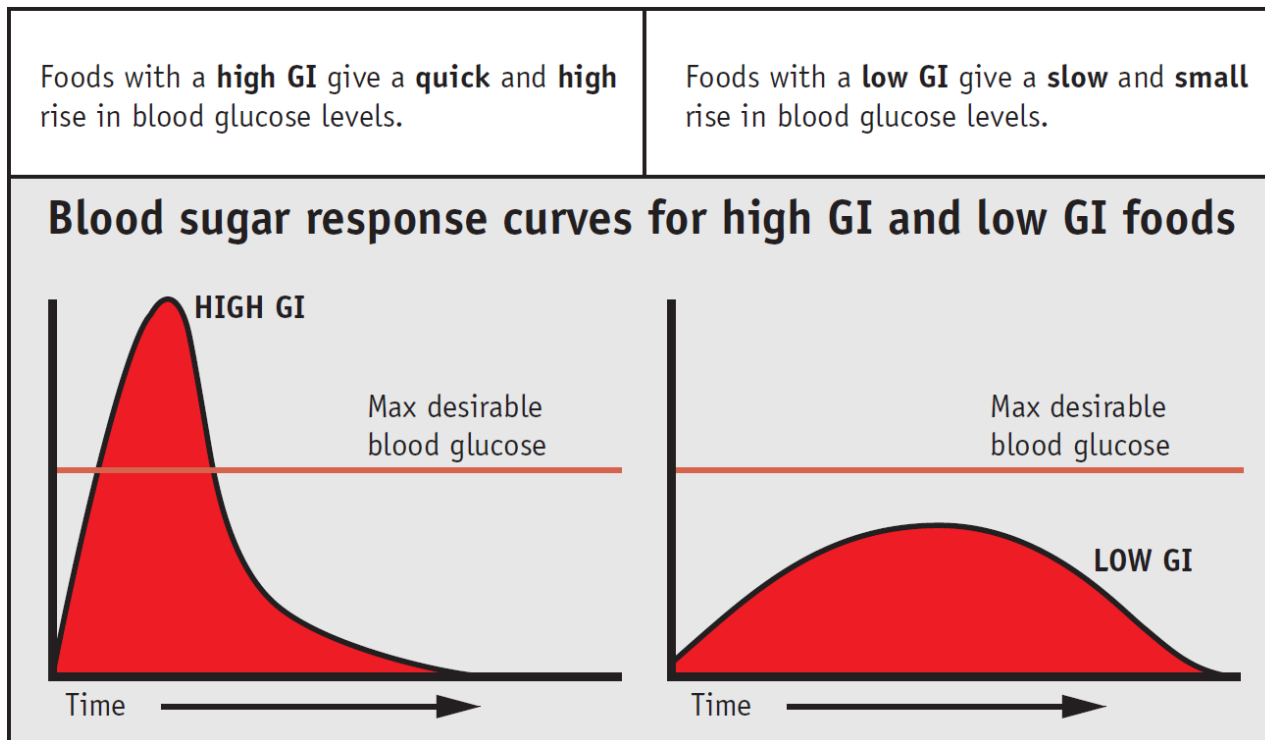
Limit fat to an amount the size of the tip of your thumb.

MILK & ALTERNATIVES*: Drink up to 250 mL (8 oz) of low-fat milk with a meal.



Glycemic Index (GI)

A scale to rank carbohydrate-rich foods/fluids based on **how quickly** and **how high** they will increase blood sugar when ingested.



Glycemic Index

Glycemic Index Categories

GREEN = **LOW GI**
(55 or less)
Choose MOST Often

YELLOW = **MEDIUM GI**
(56 to 69)
Choose SOMETIMES

RED = **HIGH GI**
(70 or more)
Choose LEAST Often

Foods in the high GI category can be swapped with foods in the medium and/or low GI category.

Diabetes Canada
Glycemic Index Guide

Also see:
glycemicindex.com

FRUITS

Apple
Applesauce (Unsweetened)
Apricots (Fresh, Dried)
Banana (Green, Unripe)
Berries
Breadfruit (Boiled)
Cantaloupe
Cherries (Fresh)
Dates (Fresh, Dried)
Durian
Figs (Fresh)
Guava
Grapefruit
Honeydew Melon
Kiwi

Banana (Ripe, Yellow)
Cherries (Canned)
Cranberries (Dried)
Figs (Dried)
Grapes
Lychee (Fresh)
Jackfruit
Pineapple
Persimmons
Raisins
Watermelon

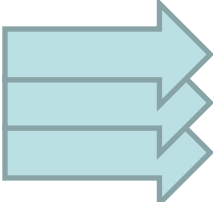

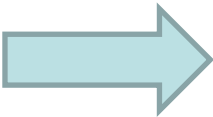
Banana (Brown, Overripe)
Breadfruit (Roasted)



Label Reading



Label Reading



Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL) pour 1 tasse (250 mL)	
Calories 110	% Daily Value*
	% valeur quotidienne*
Fat / Lipides 0 g	0 %
Saturated / saturés 0 g	0 %
+ Trans / trans 0 g	
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 22 g	22 %
Protein / Protéines 2 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 0 mg	
Sodium 0 mg	0 %
Potassium 450 mg	13 %
Calcium 30 mg	2 %
Iron / Fer 0 mg	0 %
*5% or less is a little , 15% or more is a lot	
*5 % ou moins c'est peu , 15 % ou plus c'est beaucoup	



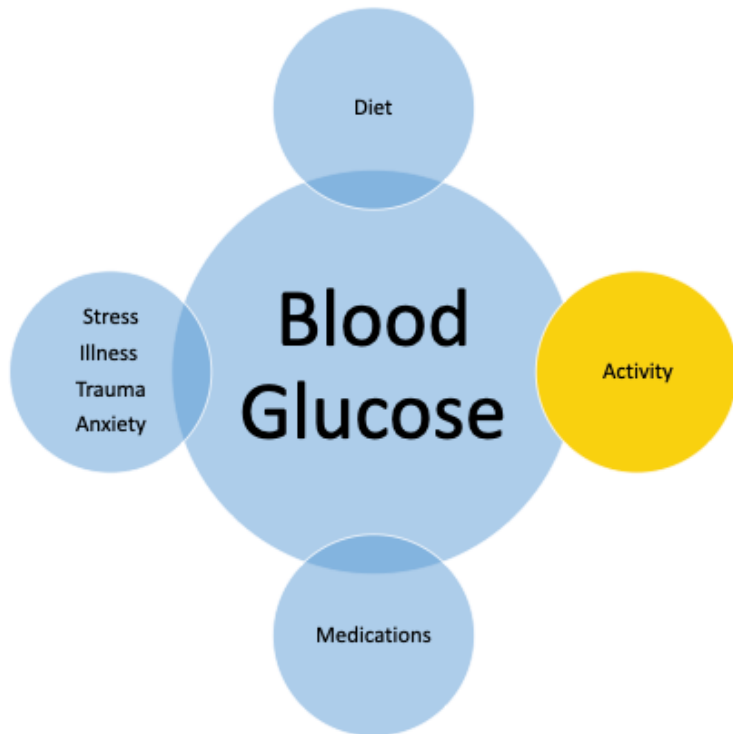


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Break

Physical Activity for Blood Sugar Control



- Movement Guidelines
- Moderate vs. Vigorous
- Aerobic Exercise
- Resistance Exercise
- Steps
- Sleep
- Sedentary Behaviour
- Benefits



Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines



SWEAT

- 150 minutes of **moderate to vigorous** aerobic physical activity PER WEEK
- Bouts of 10 minutes or more
- 2x/week muscle strengthening



What is Moderate to Vigorous Exercise?

- » **Talk Test: Test to determine how hard an individual is working:**
- **Low intensity exercise: able to talk and sing**
 - Typically used in warm up or cool down
 - Ex. Easy walking, yoga, laundry, stretching
 - **Moderate intensity: able to talk but not sing**
 - Able to sustain steady conversation
 - Ex. Brisk walking, mowing the lawn, swimming
 - **High intensity: not able to speak more than a few words at once**
 - Ex. Running, fast cycling, basketball, hockey



Resistance Exercise

Resistance exercises include:

- Weights
- Resistance bands
- Weight machines
- Body weight exercises



Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines



STEP

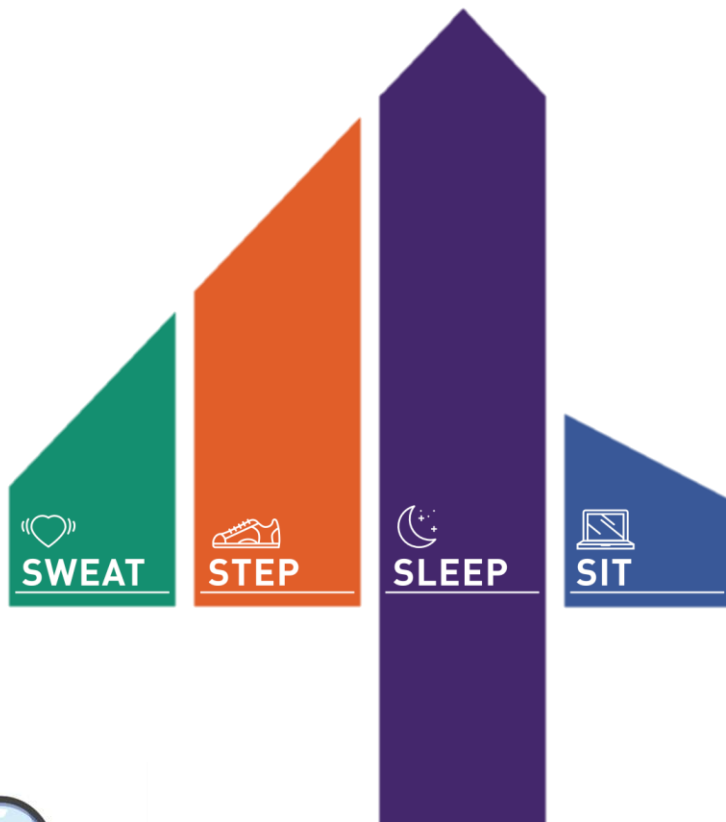
- Several hours of light physical activities including standing
- Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible by getting up briefly every 20-30 minutes

Step Guidelines

- Daily suggested goal is 7,500 steps per day!
- If your baseline is under this level: increase your steps by 500 per day every 3-4 weeks until you reach 7,500 steps!



Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines



SLEEP

- 7 to 9 hours of good quality sleep on a regular basis
- Have consistent bed and wake up times

SIT

- Limit sedentary time to 8 hours or less
- No more than 3 hours of recreational screen time



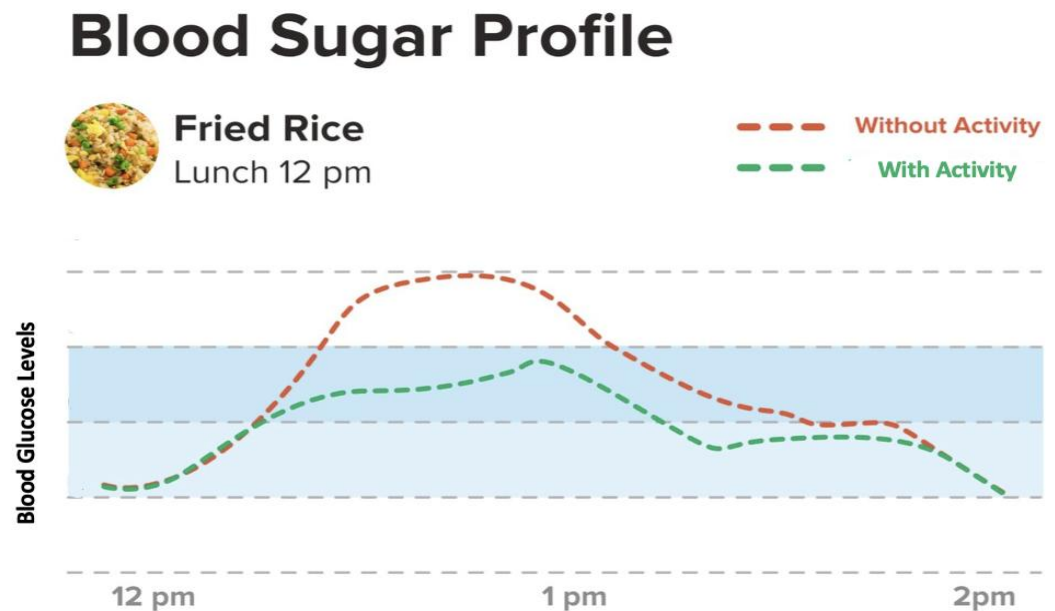
Benefits of Reducing Sedentary Behavior After a Meal

Without Activity:

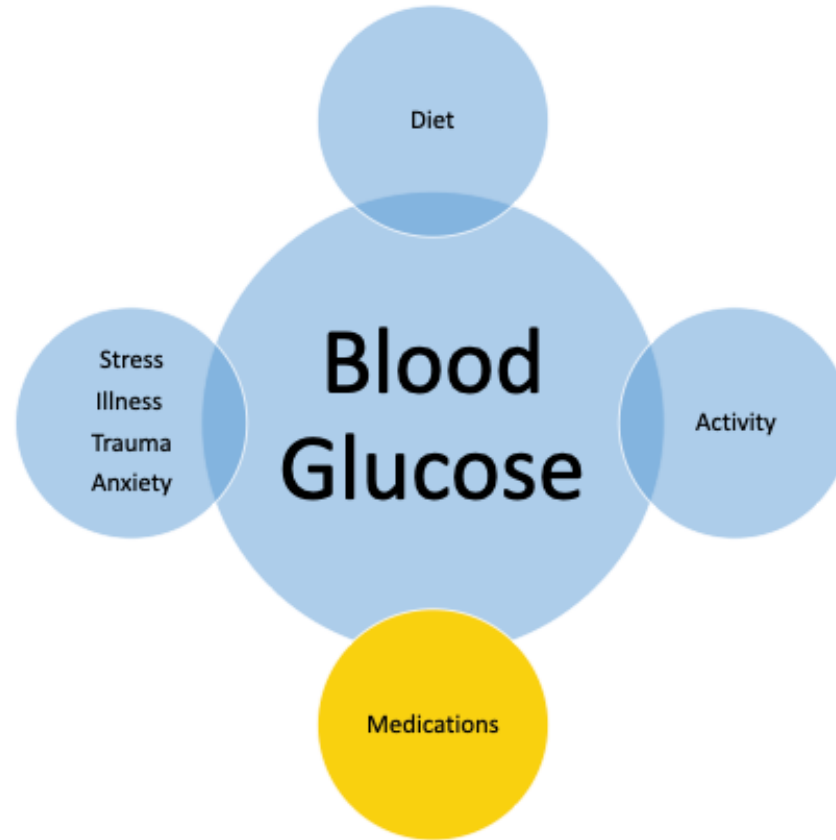
- Bigger sugar spike outside of normal/healthy range

With Activity:

- Smaller sugar spike within normal/healthy range



Medications for Blood Sugar Control

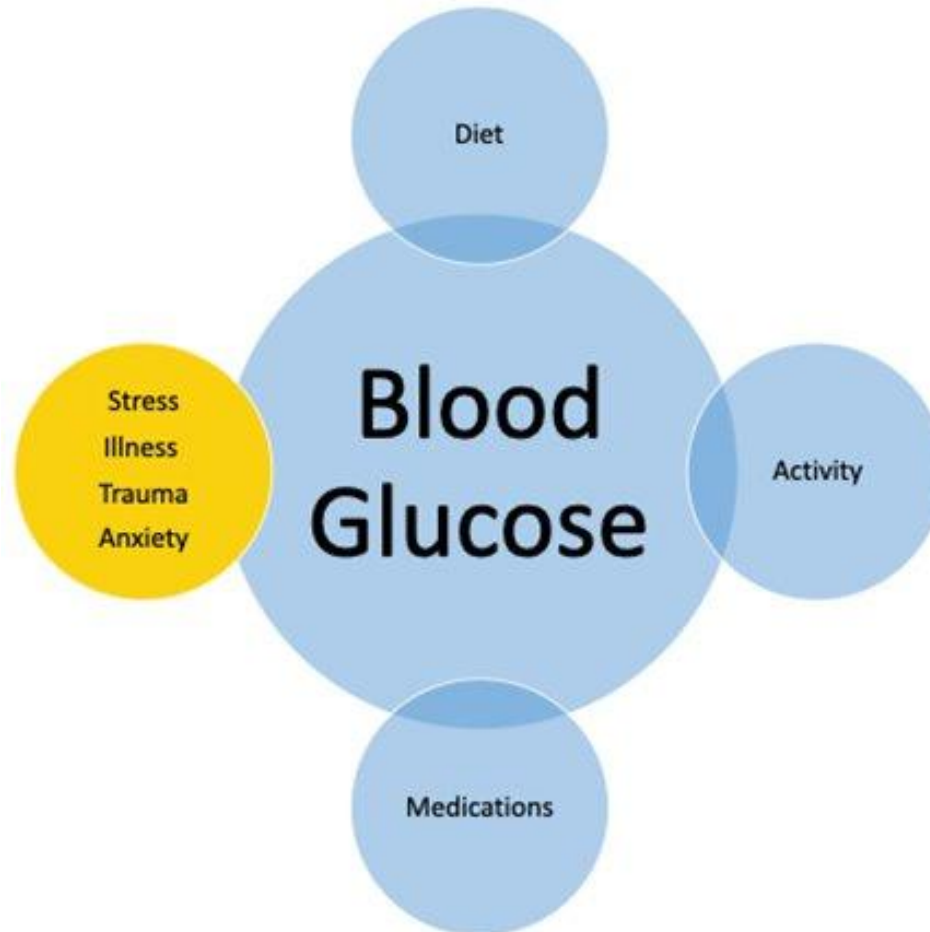


What about Medications?

- Not an indication of failure!
- Metformin is first line for most patients
- Medications not only lower blood sugar but can also protect heart and kidneys



Mental Health for Blood Sugar Control



Mental Health & Blood Sugar

- Managing a health condition can be burdensome and promote anxiety
- Distress, decreased mood, and anxiety will be barriers to your ability to manage your blood sugar
- Recognize if this is a barrier for you and reach out





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SMART Goal Tool

1. Something **YOU** want to do
2. Achievable (something you can do this week)
3. Action-specific ('Losing weight' is not action specific. 'Avoiding snacks' between meals is)
4. Answer the questions
 - **What** ▪ **How** ▪ **When** ▪ **How often**

For example: You would like to get more active

SMART Goal:

What am I going to do?

This week I will walk

How much am I going to do it?

Around the block

When am I going to do it?

Before Lunch

How many days a week am I going to do it?

3 times (Mon, Tues, Wed)

Take Home Messages

- There are many variables that affect blood sugar – controllable and uncontrollable
- No matter where your blood sugar control is currently, your health behaviours play a key role in managing it
- Better management = slower progression!
- Be sure to refer to link sent in the program email for additional resources



Invest in your health, join a free workshop to learn self-management skills and strategies.



Learning to action plan, problem solve and make decisions helps you live healthy - important skills to have when living with Diabetes!

About the Living a Healthy Life workshops:

Join a small group of participants 2.5 hours once a week for 6 weeks where peer leaders facilitate activities that include action planning, problem solving, decision making, communication, healthy eating, being active, stress reduction, medication management and more.

Workshops available:

- Living a Healthy Life with Diabetes
- Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Pain
- Living a Healthy Life with Chronic Conditions



Register online at www.swselfmanagement.ca or call 1-855-463-5692 - no referral needed!

Questions & Evaluation



Thank you!



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