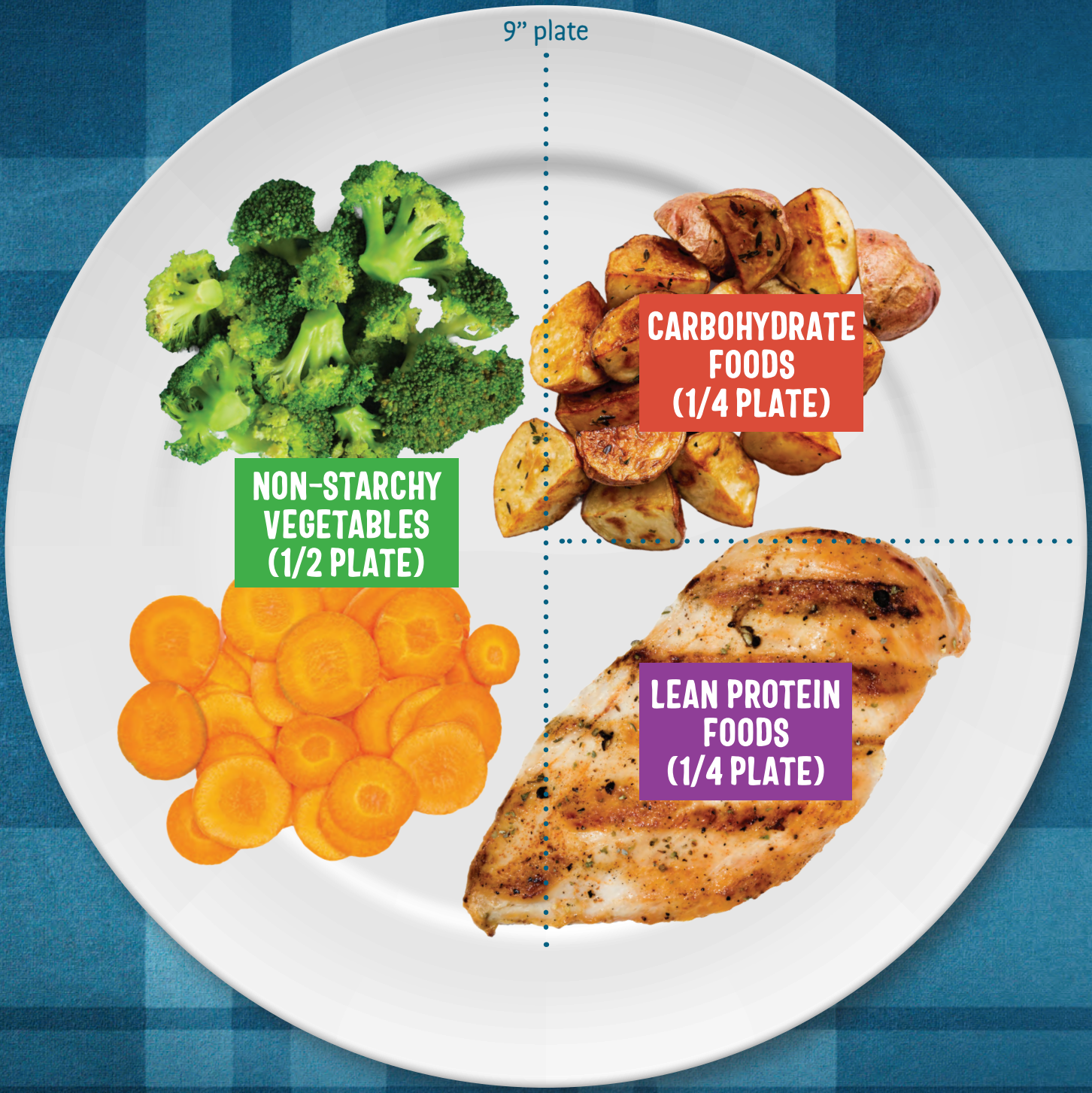
PLAN YOUR PLATE FOR DIABETES



This handout and other resources and materials can be found at **alabamapublichealth.gov/npa.**

Alabama Diabetes PROGRAM

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ALABAMA PUBLIC HEALTH

TIPS FOR PLANNING A HEALTHY PLATE:

- Fill your plate with colorful foods for a diet rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.
- Non-starchy vegetables and fruits are great food choices – aim for 5-9 servings each day.
- Limit foods with a lot of sugar such as cakes and candy. Save these for special days.
- Limit sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, fruit drinks, sport/energy drinks, and sweet tea, which can spike your blood sugar and offer no nutritional value.
- Replace whole milk with 1% low-fat or skim milk.
- Use herbs and spices in place of salt when cooking and eat fewer salty foods like bacon and potato chips. Rinse canned vegetables before cooking.
- Replace refined grains like white rice and white bread with nutritious whole grains such as brown rice and whole wheat bread.
- Reduce calories by baking, grilling, boiling, steaming, or roasting foods instead of frying. Incorporate healthy fats by using canola or olive oil when cooking and including avocados and nuts into meals and snacks.
- Including non-starchy vegetables at breakfast can help fill you up and manage your blood sugar. Try an egg sandwich with sauteed spinach or kale, a veggie omelet, or veggie hash. Experiment with it and see what works for you.

Non-starchy Vegetables

Non-starchy vegetables are lower in carbohydrates, so they do not raise blood sugar very much. They are also high in vitamins, minerals, and fiber, making them an important part of a healthy diet.

Examples: broccoli; carrots; leafy greens (kale, collards, mustard greens); onions; peppers; salad greens (lettuce, spinach, arugula); tomatoes, etc..

Carbohydrate Foods

Carbohydrate foods are higher in carbohydrates and have the greatest effect on blood sugar. Limiting portions to ¼ your plate helps keep blood sugar from rising too high after meals.

Examples: whole grains (brown rice, oats/ oatmeal, popcorn, bread, pasta, tortillas, etc.); starchy vegetables (butternut squash, green peas, potatoes, sweet potatoes/yams, etc.); beans and legumes (black beans, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, etc.); fruit and dried fruit; and some dairy products (milk, yogurt, milk substitutes, etc.)

Lean Protein Foods

Lean proteins are lower in fat and saturated fat, making them a heart healthy choice. Keep in mind that some plant-based protein foods (like beans and legumes) are also high in carbohydrates.

Examples: Animal sources (cheeses, chicken, eggs, fish, shellfish, beef, pork, turkey, etc.) and plant based sources (beans, peas, legumes, nuts, nut butters, tofu, etc.)

Beverages

Water is the best choice of drink because it contains no calories or carbohydrates and does not affect blood sugar. Other sugar free drink options include carbonated or mineral water, club soda, coffee (unsweetened or with sugar substitute), tonic water, sugar free flavored water, etc.

Combination Foods

Dishes that combine different components together are "combination foods." When choosing these, identify the different foods in the dish and think about where they would fit on the plate. For example, in a slice of pizza, the crust would be the carbohydrate, the tomato sauce and any vegetable topping would be the non-starchy vegetables, and the cheese and any meat toppings would be the protein. Examples include: chili with beans, stews, burritos, pasta salad, potato salad, tuna/chicken salad, etc.





