



Mindful Diabetes Free Guides

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FREE GUIDE

The Grocery Store Survival Guide

How to Make Practical, Blood Sugar-Conscious Choices Without Feeling Overwhelmed

A warm, practical shopping guide for building a cart that fits your life, budget, schedule, and health needs.

Inside

Planning, cart formula, aisle strategies, product comparisons, label reading, backup meals, and a printable grocery list.



BEFORE YOU SHOP

A short list you use beats an ideal list left at home

Start with what is already in your kitchen, then choose a few realistic meals for the week.



☐ 1

Check the refrigerator, freezer, and pantry.

☐ 2

Choose two or three meals.

☐ 3

Pick one or two backup meals.

☐ 4

Check the household schedule.

☐ 5

Write a short list.

☐ 6

Bring bags, coupons, mobility tools, or reminders.

Kind shopping rule

The goal is not a perfect cart. The goal is food you can use before it spoils, on days that are busy, tired, or unpredictable.



FIVE-PART CART

Use five flexible categories, not a perfect grocery script

The categories help you build meals. They do not need equal space in the cart, and fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and shelf-stable foods can all fit. [5]

Vegetables and fruit

fresh, frozen, canned

Protein

animal or plant

Fiber-rich carbs

beans, oats, grains, fruit

Healthy fats

nuts, seeds, oils

Flavor builders

spices, salsa, herbs

Use what works

Perimeter-only shopping can miss useful budget foods such as beans, oats, canned tomatoes, frozen vegetables, lentils, and shelf-stable fish.





PRODUCE

Fresh, frozen, and canned all count

Choose vegetables and fruit you will actually use. Fresh can be wonderful, but it is not morally superior to frozen or canned options. [6]

Fresh

Useful when it will be eaten before spoiling.

- Leafy greens
- Peppers
- Carrots
- Tomatoes

Frozen

Helpful for convenience and reducing waste.

- Broccoli
- Mixed vegetables
- Berries
- Greens

Canned

Useful for low-energy days and shelf stability.

- Tomatoes
- Peaches in water or juice
- Carrots
- Vegetable mixes

What to check

For canned fruit, check syrup versus water or juice. For vegetables, compare sodium when practical. For frozen produce, check sauces and added sugars.

FROZEN FOODS

The freezer section can reduce waste and rescue dinner

Frozen foods can be affordable, fast, and useful. The package details matter more than the freezer aisle itself.

**Frozen greens**

Soups, eggs, bowls, sauces.

**Frozen berries**

Yogurt, oats, smoothies.

**Mixed vegetables**
Fast side or stir-fry base.**Frozen fish**

Protein backup for busy weeks.

Check the package

Look for sauce, added sugar, sodium, serving size, protein, and vegetables. A simple frozen meal can still be supplemented with extra vegetables or protein.

CANNED AND SHELF-STABLE

Pantry foods are not a fallback failure

Canned, dried, and shelf-stable foods can make useful emergency meals. Oats belong with pantry grains, not canned foods.

**Canned beans**

Rinsing may reduce some sodium; draining changes the final contents.

**Canned tomatoes**

Useful for soups, stews, sauces, and shakshuka-style meals.

**Tuna, salmon, or chicken**

Shelf-stable protein; compare sodium and serving size.

**Canned vegetables or fruit**

Look for sodium, syrup, water, or juice as needed.

**Dried lentils**

Quick-cooking pantry protein plus carbohydrate and fiber.

**Oats**

A pantry grain, useful for breakfast or baking, not canned food.

Backup meal idea

Keep one meal you can make when energy is low: beans plus tomatoes plus frozen vegetables, or soup plus extra protein and a whole-grain side.



PROTEIN CHOICES

Choose by use, budget, culture, storage, and medical needs

Protein foods can be animal-based or plant-based. Beans and lentils provide protein, carbohydrate, and fiber, so they may matter in glucose planning. [8]



Quick fridge proteins

Eggs, yogurt, cottage cheese, tofu, tempeh.



Freezer proteins

Fish, poultry, lean meats, edamame, cooked beans.



Pantry proteins

Beans, lentils, canned fish or chicken, nuts, seeds.



Meal context

Tacos, soup, stir-fry, bowls, sandwiches, salads.

No moral ranking

The best protein option is the one that fits the meal, the household, allergies, taste, storage, preparation time, and medical needs.



PLANT PROTEINS

Canned beans count

You do not need to begin with dried beans. Start where your time, tools, digestion, and budget are today.



Beans

Tacos, soups, bowls, salads.



Lentils

Dal, soup, curry, salad.



Tofu

Stir-fry, bowls, scramble.



Tempeh

Skillet meals, sandwiches.



Edamame

Snacks, sides, bowls.



Seasoning

Cumin, garlic, ginger, curry, salsa, herbs.

Glucose planning note

Beans, lentils, and edamame are often filling because they bring protein and fiber, but they also contain carbohydrate. Use your own plan if you count carbs.



BREADS, GRAINS, CEREALS, AND TORTILLAS

Front-package claims are only the first sentence

Compare similar products by serving size, total carbohydrate, fiber, added sugar, saturated fat when relevant, ingredients, and what you enjoy.

Front claim	Useful next check	Why it matters
Multigrain	Ingredient list	May not mean whole grain
Whole grain	Fiber + carbs	Still compare serving sizes
Keto	Saturated fat + fiber	Claim alone is not enough
High-fiber	Serving size + tolerance	More is not always better
No added sugar	Total carbohydrate	May still contain starch

Store-shelf method

Pick two similar items, then compare the label. One number does not decide the best choice; the food has to fit your meal, taste, budget, and glucose plan.



DAIRY AND ALTERNATIVES

The cooler section is not one category nutritionally

Milk and yogurt often contain carbohydrate. Cheese usually has little carbohydrate, but can add saturated fat and sodium. Fortified soy milk differs from many other plant beverages. [7]



Milk

Check serving size, carbohydrate, and how you use it.



Plain yogurt

Check protein and added sugar; add fruit if desired.



Flavored yogurt

Check added sugar and total carbohydrate.



Cheese

Often lower carb; compare sodium and saturated fat.



Fortified soy milk

Often closer to dairy milk for protein than many alternatives.



Other plant drinks

Almond, oat, coconut, and rice beverages vary widely.

Comparison prompts

Is it sweetened? How much protein? Is it fortified? Does it fit allergies, preferences, kidney needs, or other medical considerations?



SNACKS

A planned snack can be useful, and some people may not need one

Snacking is not a character test. If snacks help your schedule, medication plan, activity, or hunger, make them practical.



Fruit + nuts

Portable, filling, easy to repeat.



Yogurt + berries

Protein plus fruit; check added sugar.



Hummus + vegetables

Fiber, flavor, and crunch.



Egg + fruit

Simple protein plus carbohydrate.



Crackers + tuna

Shelf-stable option with protein.



Roasted chickpeas

Crunchy, portable, contains carbs and fiber.



Nut butter + apple

Satisfying; portion as needed.



Popcorn + another food

May need protein or fat if it does not last.

Medication safety

If you use insulin or medicines that can cause low blood sugar, ask your care team how snacks, activity, and low-glucose treatment should be handled.



DRINKS

Change one frequent drink before changing everything

Sweet drinks can add sugar quickly, but the next step can be gradual. Juice is not universally forbidden; context and portion matter.



Water

default



Sparkling water

unsweetened



Tea or coffee

watch add-ins



Smaller sweet drink

step-down option



Soda

sugar quickly adds up



Sweet tea

sugar varies



Juice

portion and purpose matter



Energy/sports drinks

check sugar and caffeine

Alcohol safety

Alcohol can interact with diabetes medicines and can affect glucose decisions. Ask your clinician what is safe for you, especially if you use insulin or medicines that can cause lows.



NUTRITION FACTS LABEL

Start with serving size, then scan what matters for your meal

The label is a comparison tool, not a personal portion prescription. Use it alongside your own plan and the way you will eat the food. [1,2]

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size	1 cup 1
Servings per container	2 2
Calories	240
Total Fat	12g 15%
Saturated Fat	4g 20% 6
Sodium	480mg 21% 7
Total Carbohydrate	34g 12% 3
Dietary Fiber	4g 14% 4
Total Sugars	12g
Added Sugars	8g 16% 5

- 1 Serving size describes the label.
- 2 Servings per container can change the math.
- 3 Total carbohydrate is the main carb line.
- 4 Fiber is included in total carbohydrate.
- 5 Added sugar is separate from total sugars.
- 6 Saturated fat helps compare similar foods.
- 7 Sodium and %DV help with comparison.

Fast rule of thumb

For many nutrients, 5% Daily Value or less is low and 20% Daily Value or more is high. The amount is per labeled serving. [2]



CARBS AND ADDED SUGAR

Added sugar is one clue; total carbohydrate is still the main carb line

Total carbohydrate includes starch, sugars, added sugars, and fiber. It can matter for carbohydrate-counting or glucose-management plans. [3,4]

Total carbohydrate includes

Starches

Sugars

Added sugars

Fiber

Ingredient words	Still check
Syrup, dextrose, sucrose	Total carbohydrate
Honey, agave, molasses	Added sugars + serving size
Juice concentrate	Total carbs and portion
No sugar added	May not be low carbohydrate
Sugar-free	May not be carbohydrate-free

Plain-English takeaway

Ingredient names can help you notice added sweeteners. They do not replace the Nutrition Facts label or your portion.



FIBER

Compare similar foods, then increase gradually

Fiber-rich foods can support fullness, digestive health, overall dietary quality, cholesterol management, and more balanced meals. Individual glucose and digestive responses vary.

Vegetables

Beans

Lentils

Oats

Whole grains

Berries

Nuts

Seeds

Nutrition Facts

Option 1

Serving size	1 bar
Total carb	28g
Dietary fiber	2g 7%
Added sugars	9g 18%
Sodium	120mg 5%

Nutrition Facts

Option 2

Serving size	1 bar
Total carb	29g
Dietary fiber	6g 21%
Added sugars	5g 10%
Sodium	150mg 7%

Comfort note

Increase fiber gradually, drink fluids, and adjust for digestive conditions, kidney needs, medications, and your care team's advice.



SODIUM

Compare similar products before deciding

The FDA Daily Value for sodium is 2,300 mg per day. The %DV is per labeled serving, and individual recommendations may differ. [2,9]

Nutrition Facts

Option 1 canned soup

Serving size	1 cup
Servings/container	2
Sodium	520mg 23%
Total carb	24g 9%
Protein	9g

Nutrition Facts

Option 2 canned soup

Serving size	1 cup
Servings/container	2
Sodium	760mg 33%
Total carb	23g 8%
Protein	10g

How to compare

First compare the same serving size. Then ask how much you will actually eat, how often you buy it, and what else is in the meal.

Daily Value cue

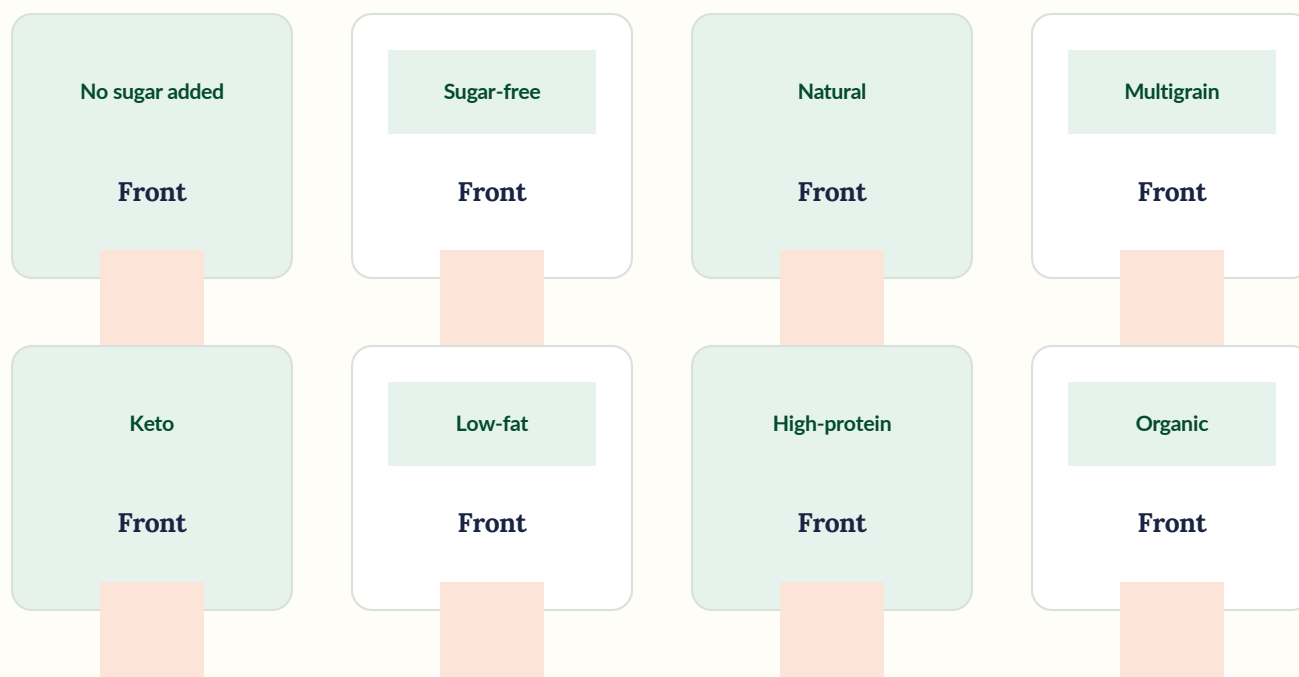
For many nutrients, 5% DV or less is generally low and 20% DV or more is generally high. One label line does not make a food universally good or bad.



INGREDIENT LISTS AND MARKETING CLAIMS

Front labels can be useful, but they are not the whole story

Claims may be helpful clues. They do not replace the Nutrition Facts label, ingredient list, serving size, and your health needs. [1,3]



Back-of-package checks

Serving size, total carbohydrate, fiber, added sugar, saturated fat, sodium, and ingredient list. Net carbs is not one of the standard Nutrition Facts lines. [1]

BUDGET STRATEGIES

Let budget be part of the plan, not a source of shame

A realistic plan uses what is already available and avoids buying aspirational foods that will not be eaten.



- ☐ Shop the kitchen first.
- ☐ Plan meals around what is already available.
- ☐ Compare unit prices.
- ☐ Use store brands.
- ☐ Use frozen vegetables.
- ☐ Use canned beans.
- ☐ Buy seasonal produce when useful.
- ☐ Freeze leftovers.
- ☐ Build pantry backup meals.
- ☐ Reduce waste before adding more variety.

Useful question

Will I actually eat this before it spoils? That question can protect both your budget and your energy.



TEN-MINUTE MEAL FORMULAS

Build from a base, a protein, a vegetable or fruit, and flavor

These are flexible formulas, not prescriptions. Swap based on culture, budget, appetite, allergies, tools, and what is already in the kitchen.

Taco or tortilla meal

Tortilla + beans or protein + cabbage or frozen vegetables + salsa or avocado

Rice bowl

Rice + tofu, egg, fish, or chicken + frozen stir-fry vegetables + sauce

Pantry plate

Crackers or bread + tuna, hummus, or beans + cucumber, carrots, or fruit

Soup upgrade

Canned soup + extra vegetables + beans, chicken, tofu, or egg + whole-grain side

Backup meal line

Write one formula on your grocery list. Repeating a meal that works is not boring; it is a way to lower decision fatigue.



PRINTABLE GROCERY CHECKLIST

Make one list that works for your household

Use this as a starting point. Add what fits your family, budget, culture, medical needs, and schedule.

☐ Shop my kitchen first: refrigerator		Qty	☐ Flavor builders		Qty
☐ Shop my kitchen first: freezer		Qty	☐ Dairy or alternatives		Qty
☐ Shop my kitchen first: pantry		Qty	☐ Drinks		Qty
☐ Produce		Qty	☐ Snacks		Qty
☐ Protein		Qty	☐ Pantry and freezer backups		Qty
☐ Fiber-rich carbohydrates		Qty	☐ Household or non-food items		Qty
☐ Healthy fats		Qty			

Meals planned

Backup meals

Already have

Need to buy / budget

Store or household notes



Make the store easier next time

Save one list that worked, one backup meal, and one product comparison. The next grocery trip gets easier when you do not start from scratch.

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Medical disclaimer

This guide is general education, not medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Do not change medication, insulin, glucose targets, or a prescribed medical diet based on this guide.



REFERENCES AND SAFETY

References and medical disclaimer

Every numbered citation in this guide appears here.

Medical disclaimer

This guide provides general health education. It is not medical advice, diagnosis, treatment, nutrition therapy, or a medication plan. Do not change insulin, diabetes medication, cholesterol medication, glucose targets, pregnancy care, kidney-disease care, or any prescribed medical diet because of this guide. For urgent symptoms, seek medical care.

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