

Jewish Celebrations & Type 1 Diabetes

There are many Jewish festivals celebrated throughout the year. People with diabetes may need to plan ahead for the feasting and fasting to reduce the effect on diabetes.

Food plays a big role at each festival, with traditional foods and large family meals.

People with diabetes do not necessarily need to stop eating traditional festive foods and even sweet foods, honey and alcohol (for those old enough), can be enjoyed in moderation. It is important to remember to eat well, and stay active, as this will help you to manage blood glucose levels.



Fasting

! Fasting may take place during Jewish festivals and celebrations. If considering fasting, please consult your diabetes team or rabbi. You might be exempted from the fast, or your management of the fast might be different because of diabetes. !

How to fast safely when you have diabetes

Fasting can increase the risk of hypoglycaemia. People using insulin are most at risk of hypoglycaemia. Check glucose regularly during the fast.



Treat the hypo if your glucose is below 3.9mmol/L

During festival season, it can be difficult to moderate your intake of the lovely celebration foods on offer which may lead to high glucose levels.



During festival periods, eating lots of high fat, high carbohydrate, calorie filled foods after any fasting period, may cause high glucose levels for a long time, particularly overnight.

Ask your diabetes team for insulin strategies that might help prevent this.



Healthy Festival Food Tips

Rosh Hashanah (new year celebration)

This is the Jewish new year, Rosh Hashanah celebrates the creation of the world and marks the beginning of the days of awe, a 10-day period which builds up to the Yom Kippur holiday.

Traditional foods for Rosh Hashanna



Tzimmes

Honey Cake



Brisket

Dried Fruits





Some main dishes are cooked with honey/sugar this would have implications for diabetes and weight.



Enjoy challah in moderation as it is high in sugar. If you wanted to make your recipe healthier, you could swap in some wholemeal flour and reduce the amount of sugar and olive oil.



Fill up with nutritious foods such as fish, couscous and vegetables. Choose basmati or long grain rice, quinoa, bulgur or buckwheat.



Homemade honey cake can be made healthier with ground almonds, nuts and seeds, increasing the healthy fats and protein content.

Purim

Hamantaschen
You could make your hamantaschen healthier by swapping the filling for a mix with poppy seeds, nuts or dates and by using less sugar.



Celebratory Meal
Seudat Purim



Choose slow acting starchy carbohydrates such as basmati rice, pasta, new potatoes, quinoa, couscous, multiseeded bread or spelt sourdough challah and lentils or beans.

Instead of buying hamantaschen try making your own and use almond meal instead of flour. Almond meal is lower in carbohydrates and so has less impact on blood glucose levels. It is also a good source of protein and heart healthy fats.



Pesach (passover)

This spring festival falls around march or april time. The weeklong festival has a number of important rituals, including a traditional passover meal known as a seder.

Matzah

These simple and plain tasting flatbreads are a form of starchy carbohydrate. Healthier swaps would include adding a savoury topping like smoked salmon or cheese instead of jam.



Replace matzah for breakfast like a natural yoghurt with some fresh fruit or a vegetable omelette. Remember to include matzah when carb counting.

Hanukkah (the festival of lights)

An eight-day jewish celebration often called the festival of lights. The holiday is celebrated with the lighting of the menorah, traditional foods, games and gifts.

Potato Latkes can be made using sweet potato, shallow fry or bake the potatoes using less oil.



For frying into the pan. One teaspoon of olive or rapeseed oil per person.

Activity and Lifestyle during Festive Periods

Children and young people should aim to be active for at least 60 minutes every day, including during festival periods. This will also help to reduce glucose levels and help insulin to work better.

60
min+



Go for a morning walk or do a workout at home with weights or steps. Even doing chores is a good way to be active.

You could walk to and from the synagogue with family members or friends.



Limit intense exercise during times of fasting.

Sleeping Well

Sleeping well is very important for general health and a good way to help keep your blood glucose levels steady.

Having a big meal close to bedtime may make you feel uncomfortable and you might find it difficult to sleep.

Switch off from screens a few hours before bed.

