

## Po Tay Toe or Po Tot Toe

Over the holiday break, I overheard various conversations of confusion. One was related to the potato. This was not “how do you pronounce?” but a “what is it classified as?” question.

Botanically, a potato is a root of a plant. A potato is one of many roots people enjoy — think carrots, beets, onions, etc. We eat numerous parts of plants including stems (celery, asparagus), leaves (lettuce), flowers (cauliflower), fruit (tomatoes, cucumbers) and seeds (corn).

When considering food groups, these items will be classified as fruits and vegetables. This is where things can be confusing — is a cucumber a fruit or vegetable? Botanically, it is the fruit of a plant but it is in the vegetable group when using MyPlate food group categories.

Confusion can also come from the categories of starchy and non-starchy vegetables. Potatoes, corn, lima beans, and peas contain high amounts of starch. For someone with pre-diabetes or diabetes, these starchy choices will raise blood sugar levels since they are high in carbohydrates. Diabetics need to limit sizes of starchy foods to a 1/3 cup portion size or covering no more than 1/4 of a 9-inch plate.

Consuming non-starchy vegetables is a great idea for everyone, since these choices provide fiber, vitamins and minerals. Examples like broccoli, green beans, peppers, tomatoes, spinach, and cucumbers are great choices because they help fill you up, but do not have as great of an impact on blood glucose. Diabetics should fill half of their plate with non-starchy vegetables.

While non-starchy vegetables are an excellent source of many nutrients and fiber, they are not a completely “free” food for diabetics. Since they do contain small amounts of carbohydrate (up to 5 grams of carbohydrate per serving) large portions (i.e. a triple portion) can still affect blood glucose.

As a point of reference, the MyPlate recommendation ranges from a 2 to 3 cup equivalent per day, depending upon caloric need. A half-cup equivalent is ½ cup of dense uncooked vegetables (i.e. chopped celery or raw broccoli), ½ cup of a cooked vegetable (regardless of whether initially a dense or leafy vegetable), 1 cup of a raw, leafy vegetable, or 6 baby carrots.

K-State Research and Extension Cowley County will be partnering with local nutrition and diabetes professionals to offer a Dining with Diabetes class series in Winfield beginning Thursday, February 3. The four-session class will help anyone wanting to make healthier food and activity choices. Contact the office at 221-5450 for registration information.

*Sources: Resources from Dining with Diabetes and Extension Master Gardeners*

### ***Upcoming K-State Research and Extension Events***

K-State Research and Extension is an equal opportunity employer and provider. Call 620-221-5450 for disability accommodations and scholarship requests.

**Dining with Diabetes** - Thursdays, February 3, 10, 17 & 24, Winfield Early Learning Center Cafeteria, 509 E Eighth Avenue, Winfield, 5:15-7:15 p.m., \$25 for 4 sessions, Call 620-221-5450 to reserve.

**Stay Strong, Stay Healthy** - Arkansas City class with Golden Tigers \$20, Sixteen sessions, Mondays and Wednesdays, beginning February 2, 11 a.m. - 12 p.m., 620-441-5225

Winfield Stay Strong, Stay Healthy class details to be finalized soon!

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