



How to Kwanzaa with T1D

Kwanzaa, meaning “first fruits of the harvest,” is a holiday that celebrates the unity, culture, and heritage of the African, Caribbean, and African American cultures. During this celebration, there is much reflection, gratitude, and recommitment to a healthy and strong family and community. Like any holiday, food can be the center of the celebration. With T1D, being mindful and balancing food traditions is the best way to enjoy the holiday like never before. Check out some tips on eating and enjoying Kwanzaa with your family. You’ve got this.

Plan Ahead



Consider a plan for navigating food displays and presentations: During the holidays, it’s common for foods to be put on display for all to eat and for everyone to grab food for their plate, especially with large families.



Sometimes, food can be served buffet-style or family-style, or all the food can be presented at the table. Consider placing the food buffet-style in the kitchen versus on the table to avoid overeating mindlessly.



Consider baking fried versions of some traditional recipes, such as plantains.



Work with your healthcare team to come up with the best holiday insulin dosing plan for you. They may recommend basal changes, dosing insulin earlier for meals, and adjustments to carb ratios during times of extra food and activity.

Monitor blood sugar regularly

Remember to monitor and check glucose levels before and after meals, adjust insulin as needed, and take a minute to step away and reflect on your blood sugars.

With your support, we are creating a movement to improve and change life with T1D, advancing breakthroughs on the way to cures.

To find out more, visit BreakthroughT1D.org.



Enjoy your meal



Aim to load your plate with non-starchy vegetables of different colors first, followed by protein and starchy food last.



Indulge in the variety of flavors: Meals during the Kwanzaa celebration highlight flavors that combine African ingredients with influences from Caribbean and African American cuisines. Consider eating a more significant portion of protein, like roasted chicken and various fish.

Movement and Memories



Celebrate with movement by dancing and making new memories while reflecting on old memories. Encourage your family and friends to take a 10-minute walk with you after your meal.



Focus on fostering relationships during this time and taking on the principles of the Kwanzaa holiday.



Be prepared for emergencies

Bring your T1D kit, which should include your blood glucose meter, extra insulin, and fast-acting glucose sources. If you are traveling, bring extra pump site changes and CGM sensors in case your T1D tech fails.

“Yes, I can eat that!” and “No, thank you.”

Let the well-meaning “food police” know that having T1D doesn’t mean you can’t have the foods you love; it just takes a little more planning.

Have friendly boundaries around family offering you food you may not want.

Because Kwanzaa celebrates unity and fellowship, food offerings may be given more than you can physically eat. It is okay to take food offerings home to avoid overeating in the present moment.

Created by Breakthrough T1D in Partnership with EatWellExchange



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Kwanzaa Carb Count Guide

Kwanzaa is more than celebrating foods from the African Diaspora; it's also about celebrating the principles of Kwanzaa, cultural traditions, and a sense of community. Navigating Kwanzaa and T1D gets easier when you have a plan while eating high-carb traditional African dishes and cuisine. It is also essential to fill your meals with the African Diaspora's high-fiber foods to support a balanced and favorable diet, resulting in manageable blood sugars.

Traditional Kwanzaa Dishes

Peanut stew	1c	25g
Lentil soup/stew	½c	25g
Gumbo	1c	12g
Cornbread	1 sm piece	20g
Plantains	1c	50g
Black-eyed peas	½c	15g
Banana fritters	1 med	15g
Sweet potato casserole	½c	40g
Fresh fruits	½c	15g
FuFu (cassava or plantain)	1c	35g
Jollof rice	½c	20g

Beverages

Sorrel (depending on sugar content)	1c	15g
Coquito	½c	25g
Ginger Beer, sweetened	1c	25g

PRO TIP!

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