

# Diet Therapy



## Adapting Therapeutic Diets to Jewish Food Customs

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THE FOOD habits of Jewish people living in the United States today differ with each individual, depending on his degree of acculturation and whether he belongs to the Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform group. With the days of immigration thirty or more years behind them, the food selection of American Jewish families is now influenced to varying degrees by the eating pattern of the country in which they live, the food habits of the country from which they or their forefathers came, and the Biblical and rabbinical regulations concerning food known as the Jewish dietary laws. The Jewish individual whose eating habits are similar to those of the general population poses few unusual problems to the non-Jewish physician, dietitian or nurse when dietary guidance is necessary. It, therefore, is sometimes puzzling to these professional people when they must work with another Jewish patient whose food selection is restricted by the rules of the religion which he observes.

Variations in observance are due largely to the differences in interpretation and importance placed on the dietary laws by the three schools of thought among American Jews today. Orthodox Jews still place great value on the traditional and ceremonial practices of their religion, and observe the dietary laws under all conditions. Reform Jews place much less emphasis on rules which they consider to

be purely ceremonial and tend to minimize the significance of dietary laws. Conservative Jews stand between these two groups and, while nominally adhering to dietary laws, sometimes draw the distinction between the observance of the rules in the home and outside.

It is helpful for anyone working with Jewish patients to know the basic elements of their dietary laws, and the significance of these laws to the observant Jew. It is also helpful to know some of the favorite foods and food customs related to everyday living and to special holidays.

### THE DIETARY LAWS

The dietary laws are Biblical ordinances codified and interpreted by the rabbis in the Talmud into specific instructions concerning those foods which are fit and proper for the Jewish people to eat. Regulations include selection, preparation and service of the foods involved. The Bible gives no reason for these rules, but observant Jews feel that the rules known as Kashruth and hallowed since the time of Moses, are a positive means of self-purification and of service to their God. Although many hygienic and ethical bases have been alleged for these rules, the spiritual factors of sanctification and self-discipline are the primary motivations for those who adhere to them.

Rules pertain chiefly to the selection, slaughter and preparation of meat. Animals allowed

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for food are those quadrupeds with a cloven hoof who chew a cud, specifically cattle, sheep, goats and deer.<sup>1,2</sup> Permissible fowls are chicken, turkey, goose, pheasant and duck.<sup>3</sup> All animals must be inspected for disease and slaughtered by a ritual slaughterer (Schochet) according to specified rules which provide for minimum pain to the animal and maximum draining of blood in the slaughtering. With the quadrupeds, only the forequarter of the animal may be used. Only if the hip sinew of the thigh vein can be removed is the hind permissible.<sup>4</sup> Beef, veal, lamb, liver, chicken and turkey, freshly killed, according to ritual, are available to Jewish housewives at special kosher butcher shops and are more expensive than the same meats would be in the regular markets. Since only the forequarter of the animal is used, many of the cuts are the less tender ones and the choicer steaks, chops and roasts are not available from the kosher butcher shop.

Mosaic law also repeatedly forbids blood as food, since blood is synonymous with life.<sup>5-8</sup> This necessitates the traditional process of "koshering" the meat and poultry to remove all blood before it may be cooked. This is a process of soaking the meat in water, salting it thoroughly, allowing it to drain and then washing it three times to remove the salt. (This process probably removes from the meat some of its iron and B-complex vitamin value too).

From another oft-repeated statement in the Bible, "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk,"<sup>9-11</sup> has come the rule against combining meat and milk in the same meal. Milk or milk foods may be eaten immediately before the meat, but not with it. After meat has been consumed, six hours must elapse before milk products may be used. Also, because of this rule, traditional orthodox Jewish homes must keep two completely separate sets of dishes, silver, and cooking equipment, one for "fleischig" (or meat) meals and one for "milchig" (or dairy) meals.

The fish prescribed in the Bible are those with fins and scales.<sup>12,13</sup> Shellfish and eels are therefore excluded. Fish may be eaten with either dairy or meat meals. Since rules per-

taining to fish are less strict than those relating to meat, fish is commonly used by orthodox Jews to enable them to adhere to the dietary laws when they must eat away from home.

Eggs, too, may be used with either meat or with milk. However, any egg yolk containing a speck of blood may not be used, since the blood spot is considered the sign of a new life.

Fruit, vegetables, cereal products and all of the other foods that make up a normal nutritious diet, may be used without restrictions. Canned or frozen foods, bakery products, crackers, confections, prepared food mixtures and margarine, until recently, were viewed skeptically by orthodox Jews because of doubt as to possible sources of ingredients, combinations of ingredients and conditions of manufacture. At the present time, there are an increasing number of food manufacturing companies preparing these foods under acceptable kosher standards to satisfy the most observant.

#### TYPICAL MEAL PATTERN

Within the restrictions of the dietary laws, the basic foods recommended for good nutrition can be used in sufficient quantity. A meal pattern which would fit both the dietary rules and the requirements of a nutritionally adequate diet would be:

MEAL PATTERN	TYPICAL MENU
<i>Breakfast</i>	
Fruit, citrus—1 serving	Orange juice
Cereal, whole grain or enriched— $\frac{1}{2}$ cup	Oatmeal with milk and sugar
Milk and sugar for cereal	
Egg—one	Soft cooked egg
Whole grain or enriched bread—1 slice	Toast
Butter—2 teaspoons	Sweet butter
Beverage	Coffee with cream, sugar
<i>Luncheon (or Supper)</i>	
Cheese, egg or fish—1 serving	Noodle pudding*
	Cottage cheese and sour cream
Vegetable, green or yellow, raw—1 serving	Chopped raw vegetables
Bread, whole grain or enriched—1 slice	Pumpernickel—sweet butter
Butter—2 teaspoons	
Dessert	Applesauce
Milk—1 cup	Milk

	<i>Dinner</i>
Soup	Borscht
Meat—3 oz	Pot roast of beef
Potato—1 serving	Potato pancake
Vegetable—1 serving	Peas and carrots
Whole grain or enriched bread—1 slice	Lettuce and tomato Pumpnickel bread
Fruit	Dried fruit compote
Beverage	Tea with lemon

\* Noodles baked with egg, seasoning and sometimes cottage cheese and sour cream.

#### MODIFICATIONS FOR THERAPEUTIC DIETS

It is possible to provide a nutritionally adequate normal diet within the restrictions of the Jewish dietary laws (Table I). The next question is how to adapt this basic diet for the various therapeutic diets.

When a restricted caloric intake is required, the basic meal pattern can easily be altered according to the usual principles of caloric restriction. It should be noted that many

Jewish housewives use chicken fat generously in preparation of meat meals and the caloric value of this ingredient in their cooking must be brought to their attention. Many Jewish patients eat bread, noodles, dried legumes, coffee cakes and other pastries in quantity and these too must be restricted to reduce caloric intake. When explaining caloric restriction to Jewish patients, emphasis should be put on increased use of raw fruits and raw low-calorie vegetables as important parts of the diet.

Diabetic diets, as well as low-calorie diets, can be planned to provide variety by the use of Exchange Lists prepared by the American Dietetic Association, American Diabetes Association, Inc., and U. S. Public Health Service.<sup>14</sup>\*

When developing a meal plan for the Jewish patient, the need for taking a careful dietary history cannot be sufficiently stressed. For

TABLE I  
Nutritive Value of Basic Diet Pattern\*

Food	Measure	Weight g	Calo- ries g	Pro- tein g	Fat g	Car- bohy- drate g	Ca mg	Fe mg	A IU	As- cor- bic acid mg	Vita- mins Thi- amine mg	Ribo- flavin mg	Nia- cin mg
Milk or equivalent	2 cups	488	335	17	19	24	576	0.4	780	6	0.18	0.84	0.6
Meat or fowl†	3 oz (raw wt.)	75	210	18	15	—	10	2.8‡	4,600	—	0.09‡	0.56‡	5.0*
		Cooked											
Egg	1	54	75	6	6	—	26	1.3	550	—	0.05	0.14	Tr.
Other protein §	1 serving	60	105	11	9	—	107	0.6	235	—	0.03	0.71	1.0
Whole grain or en- riched cereal	1/2 cup	20	75	2	Tr.	16	8	0.6	—	—	0.11	0.03	0.7
(dry)													
Whole grain or en- riched bread	4 slices	100	275	9	3	52	79	1.8	—	—	0.24	0.15	2.2
Potato	1 medium	150	125	3	Tr.	29	17	1.0	30	21	0.14	0.05	1.5
Green or yellow vegetable	1-2 serv- ings	150	45	3	Tr.	9	67	1.5	4,690	35	0.12	0.12	0.9
Other vegetables	1 serving	100	35	1	Tr.	7	19	0.6	660	15	0.06	0.06	0.6
Citrus fruit	1 serving	100	45	1	Tr.	12	27	0.4	120	47	0.07	0.03	0.2
Other fruit	2 servings	200	125	1	1	32	24	1.0	1,200	18	0.08	0.08	0.8
Butter	4 teaspoons	20	145	Tr.	16	Tr.	Tr.	—	660	—	Tr.	—	Tr.
			1,595	72	69	181	960	12.0	13,525	142	1.17	2.77	13.5
Recommended dietary allowances ¶													
Women (25 years)			2,300	55	—	—	800	12	5,000	70	1.2	1.4	12
Men (25 years)			2,300	55	—	—	800	12	5,000	75	1.6	1.6	16

\* Food values are based on "Composition of Foods—Raw, Processed, Prepared," by B. K. Watt and A. L. Merrill, Agriculture Handbook, No. 8, Bureau of Human Nutrition and Home Economics, Washington, D. C., 1950. Calories and vitamin A have been rounded off to the nearest 5 and protein, fat, carbohydrate to the nearest whole gram.

† This assumes the use of beef, veal, or lamb, five times a week, chicken one time during the week, and liver one time during the week.

‡ Although no data are available, it would seem that there would be some loss of these nutrients due to the koshering process, and values would probably be somewhat below those used here.

§ Average of protein foods used at the non-meat lunch or supper, includes cheese, egg and fish.

|| Caloric needs are met by using more of the basic foods, and by adding desserts, sugar, cooking fat, etc., as desired. If part of these added foods include whole grain or enriched breads and cereals, the iron, thiamine and niacin content will be increased.

¶ Recommended Dietary Allowances, 1953, National Research Council, Washington, D. C.

those patients observing the dietary laws, the meal plan can easily be made to include the milk allowance with breakfast and the one "dairy" meal. The other meal planned as a meat meal should avoid use of milk products. Interpretation of "Meat Exchanges" to include egg, cheese and fish for the "dairy" meal must be carefully stated. The patient will also need help with "Fat Exchanges" to show him how he may use butter, sweet or sour cream and cream cheese with the "dairy" meals, and some chicken fat with the meat meal. Vegetable shortening, vegetable margarine, oil or salad dressing and nuts can be used with either.

Many patients will appreciate the thoughtfulness of the physician or dietitian who shows him how to fit some of his favorite foods into the Exchange Lists. For example, when it is not necessary to restrict sodium intake lox or herring may be used as Meat Exchanges; and appropriate servings of kasha, bagel or matzoh may be used as Bread Exchanges. A descriptive list at the end of this article defines some of the foods that Jewish patients often ask to have included in their diets.

Special thought is also required for the diabetic on fast days, particularly the Day of Atonement, "Yom Kippur." For the mild diabetic, controlled by diet alone, fasting may be feasible. The more severe diabetic who requires insulin yet wishes to fast should be encouraged by his physician to discuss his problem with his rabbi in order to be convinced of the importance of continuing his regular pattern of eating even on this holiday.

Jewish patients who require sodium-restricted diets often have difficulty in adjusting to the regimen. For those who observe the practice of koshering meat at home, as previously described, there is the conflict of whether to use the meat without this salting process, or to modify the salting process hoping to remove the added salt more completely. It was found that meat koshered by the usual process, and then boiled, contained about 334 mg of sodium/100 g portion. A similarly koshered piece of meat cooked by broiling contained 375 mg of sodium. However, it was found that the sodium content could be re-

duced to about 63 mg of sodium/100 g portion of meat by the following process. First, it is lightly salted and allowed to stand with the salt for the religiously permissible minimum time, then it is rinsed and soaked in water; finally it is boiled in a generous amount of water and the broth discarded.<sup>15</sup> Another practice which might be acceptable to some patients is to use crystalline ammonium chloride instead of sodium chloride for the koshering process.<sup>16</sup>

Many of the favorite foods of the Jewish people are highly salted. Salted fish like herring and lox, kosher style corned beef and other smoked and salted meats and fishes, pickles and pickled green tomatoes are but a few of the foods which are frequently enjoyed at family meals. However, unsalted or sweet butter is preferred by many families and this, as well as dry, unsalted cottage cheese, is easily available in food stores in Jewish neighborhoods. Unsalted matzoh, usually used for Passover, but available throughout the year are also acceptable as a cracker or bread substitute for the sodium-restricted diet.

Bland diets used for patients with peptic ulcer offer no problems in the initial stages when protein is supplied by milk, cheese and eggs. Changes in texture and consistency can be made in the usual manner. When meat is added to the diet, the meat meal must again be planned without the creamed foods, milk desserts and beverages which are commonly included with this type of diet. Plans for in-between meal snacks should also recognize the six hours which must elapse between consumption of meat and milk. Extra milk between meals can usually be placed in the mid-morning and between a dairy luncheon and a meat supper. In many cases, milk at bedtime will also be acceptable. If not, an egg or meat sandwich might be suggested.

The above discussion states some of the most important considerations to be kept in mind in planning the more usual therapeutic diets with orthodox Jewish patients. Principles here stated can be applied to the needs of individual patients for any other type of diet which might be prescribed. For these patients, every effort should be made to fit



the therapeutic diet into the religious dietary laws. When there is true conflict between the principles of the diet and the religious regulations, the patient should be encouraged to discuss the problem with his rabbi to consider effecting a practical compromise. This is usually possible when the patient is convinced that the physician or dietitian understands his problem and is trying sympathetically to work it out with him. Actually orthodox law permits, even requires, the breaking of dietary laws when it is a matter of life or death. However, many patients are genuinely upset at the thought of breaking the dietary laws in any way, even during illness.

#### FOOD CUSTOMS RELATED TO HOLIDAY OBSERVANCE

Consideration of the food habits of Jewish people must necessarily include brief mention of some of the dietary aspects of the more important holidays. Most important of the holy days is the Sabbath or day of rest observed on Saturday. The meal on Sabbath eve or Friday evening is the choicest of the week and usually includes both fish and chicken. On the Sabbath itself, no food is cooked or heated, so all food eaten is cooked the previous day and either kept warm in the oven or eaten cold.

Festival holidays of Rosh Hashanah, the New Year in September, Succoth, the Fall harvest holiday, Chanukah, the feast of lights in midwinter and Purim, a gay holiday in spring, have associated delicacies which may be used or avoided according to dietary needs.

Yom Kippur, or the Day of Atonement, occurs ten days after Rosh Hashanah and is a day of fasting when there is abstinence from all food and drink, including water, from sundown on the eve of the holiday to sundown on the holiday. People who are ill and pregnant women are urged to refrain from fasting. As mentioned heretofore where the patient persists in his desire to fast he should be advised to consult his rabbi.

Dietary consideration must especially be given to Passover, a Spring commemorative festival lasting eight days. During this period, no leavened bread or cake may be used.

Matzoh, an unleavened bread, is eaten and all cake and baked products are made from flour of ground up matzoh or potato starch, leavened only with beaten egg whites. For low-calorie or diabetic diets, three-fourths of a square or round matzoh is equal in carbohydrate value to one slice of bread.<sup>17</sup> No salt is added to these traditional Passover matzoh. In planning diets with patients, it should be noted that many of the favorite Passover dishes used are variations of fried matzoh or matzoh meal pancakes and are prepared with generous amounts of fat.

In the celebration of the Sabbath and the festivals, it is customary in Jewish homes to serve sweet grape wine as part of the religious observance. This wine is about 13 per cent alcohol and 17 per cent sugar.<sup>18</sup> Usually only about a 3 oz glass is served except at the Passover ceremonial dinners (Seders) when it is part of the ritual to fill the wine glasses four times. If at all possible, it is helpful to the patient to show him how he may adjust his diet to include this wine for holiday celebrations.

#### FOOD TERMS

The Jewish people have many favorite foods which they have learned to enjoy in the many countries of the world in which they have lived. Recipes for these foods have been adapted to fit the dietary laws, but otherwise closely resemble similar dishes prepared by the nationality groups who originated them. For consideration of these foods for possible inclusion in the patient's prescribed diet, the list of definitions of these foods is given.

*Bagel* (Baigel)—A doughnut shaped hard yeast roll.

*Blintzes*—Very thin rolled pancakes usually filled with sweetened cottage cheese mixture and served with sour cream; may also be filled with ground beef mixture or fruit mixture.

*Bob*—Fava beans served as salted nuts.

*Borscht* (Borsch)—Sweet and sour soup made either with a meat stock and beaten egg or made without meat stock and served with sour cream. This soup is usually made with beets, spinach or cabbage and may be served hot or chilled.

*Bulke* (Bulkie)—Large, light yeast roll.

*Challah* (Cholla)—Loaf of very light white bread, most commonly braided, prepared especially for the Sabbath or holidays.



*Bubke*—Coffee cake.

*Cholent*—A combination dish of fat beef, potatoes and dried beans, baked slowly in the oven to be served on the Sabbath.

*Farfel*—Noodle dough grated into barley sized grains and served in soup. During Passover, crumbled Matzoh is used as farfel.

*Fleischig*—Term describing meat or meat products.

*Gefillte Fish*—Highly seasoned chopped fish mixture, usually stuffed into the fish skin.

*Hamantaschen*—Three cornered cakes with pastry or cookie crust and filled with poppy seeds, dried fruit or cheese; traditional for Purim.

*Helzel*—Skin of poultry neck filled with rich bread or oatmeal stuffing.

*Kasha*—Buckwheat groats served as a cooked cereal or as a potato substitute with meat gravy.

*Kichlach*—Light egg cookies.

*Kishke* (or *derma*)—Beef casings stuffed with a rich seasoned filling and roasted.

*Kosher* (Kasher)—Fit or proper to eat according to the ritual of the Jewish dietary laws.

*Knaidlach* or *Kloese*—Dumplings, usually served in chicken soup. During Passover these are made with Matzoh meal and are traditional for the Seder.

*Knishes*—Pastry filled with ground meat.

*Kreplach*—Noodle dough filled with ground meat or cheese filling, similar to Italian ravioli.

*Kuchen*—Coffee cake.

*Kugel*—Pudding, common types are made with potatoes or noodles.

*Latkes*—Pancakes; potato latkes are especially popular.

*Leckach*—Honey cake traditional for Rosh Hashanah.

*Lox*—Smoked and salted salmon.

*Lukshen*—Noodles, usually used in "lukshen kugel" (see kugel) or in chicken soup.

*Matzoh*—Flat unleavened cracker used in place of bread during Passover.

*Matzoh Meal*—Finely ground matzoh used in cooking and baking primarily during Passover. Matzoh meal is often used in cooking especially in preparing meat loaf, all through the year.

*Milchig*—Refers to milk and milk products.

*Mohn*—Poppy seed.

*Nahil*—Chick peas served as salted nuts

*Pareve*—Refers to neutral foods like fish, eggs, fruit and vegetables which are permissible to use with meat or milk meals.

*Pirogen* (*Piroshkes*)—Yeast dough or pastry filled with stuffing

*Rusell*—Naturally fermented beet juice used as vinegar during Passover, especially in making borsht.

*Schav*—A soup similar to borsht made from sorrel grass.

*Schmaltz*—Rendered fat, usually chicken fat, commonly used in cooking.

*Strudel*—Thin pastry rolled up with fruit and nut filling.

*Teiglach*—Small balls of sweet dough cooked in honey.

*Tzimmes*—Pudding usually made with prunes, carrots or sweet potatoes and fat meat.

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