



Get your licks

If you think ice cream is off-limits for people with diabetes, you may be in for a treat.

BY Hope S. Warshaw, R.D., CDE PHOTOS BY Blaine Moats

Summer and ice cream just go together. Should you treat yourself? “Yes! I still love ice cream and believe people with diabetes, like me, can learn to eat just enough to quiet their inner scream while they manage the parameters of diabetes control,” says Micki Hall, R.D., CDE, PWD type 1, an assistant professor at the University of Oklahoma College of Pharmacy in Oklahoma City. Compare the calories,

carbohydrate, and fat of your favorite ice cream treats, *page 45*, to make the best choice for your health goals.

Smart scoops

It's tough to leave an ice cream shop with a right-size treat. A few easy modifications can help you indulge without the bulge.

“Order a kid’s or single scoop and skip the cone. Then slowly savor the flavor of every spoonful,” Hall says.

She counsels people to fit in frozen treats with their glucose, weight, and lipids (cholesterol and triglycerides) goals in mind—as a weekly or monthly, not daily, indulgence.

Sara Brodsky Sieman, 56 and PWD type 1 from Boston, minimizes the calories and carbohydrate in her frozen treats with a couple of successful strategies: “My husband and I split a two-scoop serving for portion and price control. But when we can’t settle on one flavor, I order a kiddie scoop in a cup.”

The dish on types

Scattered among most ice cream shops’ regular offerings are lighter options such as low-fat and low-sugar ice cream, sorbet, sherbet,

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and frozen yogurt. These varieties trim calories by limiting fat, but the carbohydrate count is often just as high because milk contains lactose, a type of sugar.

Survey the lighter options and request samples—even more-healthy calories are wasted calories if you don't enjoy them. Then run the nutrition numbers to make sure you'll bank a savings. "I've found a few flavors of frozen yogurt that satisfy my sweet tooth, but at times I just want the real thing," says Sara, who takes extra insulin to cover the carb grams in her frosty splurges. Ask for nutrition information in the store. If it's not available, check the company's Web site; most national chains provide information online.

Hall practices what she preaches: "Enjoy a small amount of your favorite frozen dessert, but just occasionally." She offers another tried-and-true tip: Plan ahead for ice cream treats by cutting calories and carb grams from a previous meal or one that follows.

Hope Warsaw, a certified diabetes educator and dietitian, wrote the Guide to Healthy Restaurant Eating, 4th edition (American Diabetes Association, 2009). She loves ice cream and indulges with one kid-size serving at a time.

Visualize (actual) serving size



A 4-ounce, or ½-cup, scoop is about 2½ inches in diameter.

Dare to compare

The serving size of each frozen treat shown is about 4 ounces, but see how the calorie, carbohydrate, and fat contents vary. Dense hard-pack varieties tend to have higher counts than air-infused soft-serve products.



Fat-free vanilla frozen yogurt:
150 cal., 33 g carb., 0 g fat
Paper cup: 0 cal.



Sugar-free vanilla ice cream:
165 cal., 32 g carb., 5 g fat
(3 g sat. fat)
Cake cone: 25 cal.,
5 g carb., 0 g fat



Soft-serve vanilla ice cream:
185 cal., 25 g carb., 7 g fat
(5 g sat. fat)
Sugar cone: 50 cal.,
10 g carb., 0 g fat



Vanilla ice cream:
260 cal., 26 g carb., 16 g fat
(10 g sat. fat)
Waffle cone: 160 cal., 28 g
carb., 4 g fat (0 g sat. fat)

Add up toppings

Tempted by toppings? A tablespoon or two of chopped candy bars, crushed cookies, or flaked coconut may seem hardly worth counting but can add 140–180 calories to your treat.

Small amounts of nuts, granola, or fruit (fresh, canned, or dried) are the most nutritious toppers.



8 cal. 2 g carb.	Maraschino cherry
8 cal. 0 g carb.	Whipped cream 1 tablespoon
50 cal. 2 g carb.	Chopped nuts 1 tablespoon
109 cal. 25 g carb.	Chocolate sauce 2 tablespoons

Deep-freeze treats

Type of frozen dessert	Description*	Calories (4-ounce serving)**	Carb.	Fat
Ice cream (hand-dipped)	A mixture of dairy ingredients (such as milk and nonfat milk), sweeteners, and flavorings. Must contain at least 10 percent milk fat.	260	26 g	16 g (10 g sat. fat)
Low-fat ice cream	A maximum of 3 g total fat per 4-ounce serving.	120	27 g	2 g (1.5 g sat. fat)
Sugar-free ice cream (or no-sugar-added)	No sugar or sugar-containing ingredients are added during processing or packaging.	165	32 g	5 g (3 g sat. fat)
Fat-free ice cream (or nonfat)	Less than 0.5 g fat per 4-ounce serving.	160	33 g	0 g
Frozen yogurt (fat-free or nonfat)	A mixture of dairy ingredients (such as milk and nonfat milk that have been cultured), sweeteners, and flavorings.	150	33 g	0 g
Sherbet	Milk-fat content of 1–2 percent and a higher sweetener content than ice cream.	170	37 g	2 g (1 g sat. fat)
Sorbet	Similar to sherbet but contains no dairy ingredients.	140	37 g	0 g

*Descriptions are based on standards set by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. **Nutrition information is based on a 4-ounce serving of vanilla or other flavors obtained from several national chain ice cream shops and online resources. 