

The Skinny on Shakes for People With Diabetes



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Last Updated: December 25, 2017



Andrey Cherkasov/Alamy

Diabetes is an increasingly common condition that causes blood sugar levels to rise higher than normal. There are several types of diabetes, but type 2 diabetes is the most common form. Type 2 diabetes is often linked to being overweight or obese and must be medically managed to prevent serious [diabetes complications](#).

Along with making lifestyle changes and taking medication, people with diabetes must keep a watchful eye on their blood glucose levels and the foods they eat throughout each day. Whether you're watching your weight or looking for a quick diabetes-friendly meal on the go, a meal replacement shake may be a good — or not so good — option for those with diabetes. Of course, a healthy diet of whole foods is always best, but shakes can provide a nice "safety net" for when a healthy meal is not an option.

While meal replacement shakes may fill you up, even the best weight loss shakes don't provide complete dietary nutrition. If you rely on weight loss or meal replacement shakes regularly, you will still need a healthy balance of real food each day, including:

1. Fat-free or low-fat dairy
2. Fresh fruits and vegetables, especially nonstarchy vegetables
3. Lean protein
4. Legumes, like beans and peas
5. Nuts
6. Seafood
7. Soy
8. Whole grains

Also, not all meal replacement shakes are created equal; even the best weight loss shakes designed for people with diabetes may fall short when it comes to complete nutrition. For example, the Glucerna Rich Chocolate Shake is [gluten-free](#) and great for people who [are lactose intolerant](#). But the Glucerna Shake is only enough to replace a moderate snack or part of a meal — not an entire meal. You will need to read the label and find out what's missing when it comes to fat, protein, carbohydrates, and calories — and then fill in with added whole foods as needed.

Some of the best weight loss shakes are high in calories — even if they are low in carbs and high in protein — and calories do count. While these meal replacements can help maintain your blood sugar level, they may cause weight gain, especially if you don't track the number of calories you ingest each day, and higher weight almost always translates to less blood sugar

control. In addition, the average adult only needs 46 to 56 grams of protein a day, [according to the Mayo Clinic](#), depending on weight and health. If you are already eating a varied, healthy diet, adding more protein with a meal replacement shake may not be necessary.

[Anita N. Ramsetty, MD](#), an endocrinologist at the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston, says it's important to review the ingredients list as well as the [nutrition label](#) of shakes before buying and trying. Skip shakes with sugar or [high fructose corn syrup](#) listed as one of the first three ingredients, and look out for [too much protein](#). If your kidneys are not functioning properly, you should be careful not to eat too much protein, as it can cause health complications. Always check with your doctor before adding anything new to your [diabetes diet](#).

Glucerna Rich Chocolate Shake Is Gluten-Free



Glucerna is [gluten-free](#) and a good choice if you're [lactose intolerant](#). Glucerna protein shakes, which are formulated both for people with diabetes and for those looking to watch their weight, come in four flavors: Rich Chocolate, Homemade Vanilla, Creamy Strawberry, and Classic Butter

Pecan, with the chocolate and vanilla also available in snack-sized portions. Overall, they're a good choice. "Their [calorie and] carb content places these shakes in the range of a moderate-sized snack or part of a meal," Dr. Ramsetty says.

Nutrition Information

- 180 calories
- 10g protein
- 16g total carbs
- 9g fat (1g saturated fat)
- 4g sugar
- 3g dietary fiber

Get a Mini-Meal With BOOST Glucose Control



BOOST Glucose Control is a nutritional drink designed to be a [mini-meal or snack](#), and is made specifically for people on a [type 2 diabetes management](#)

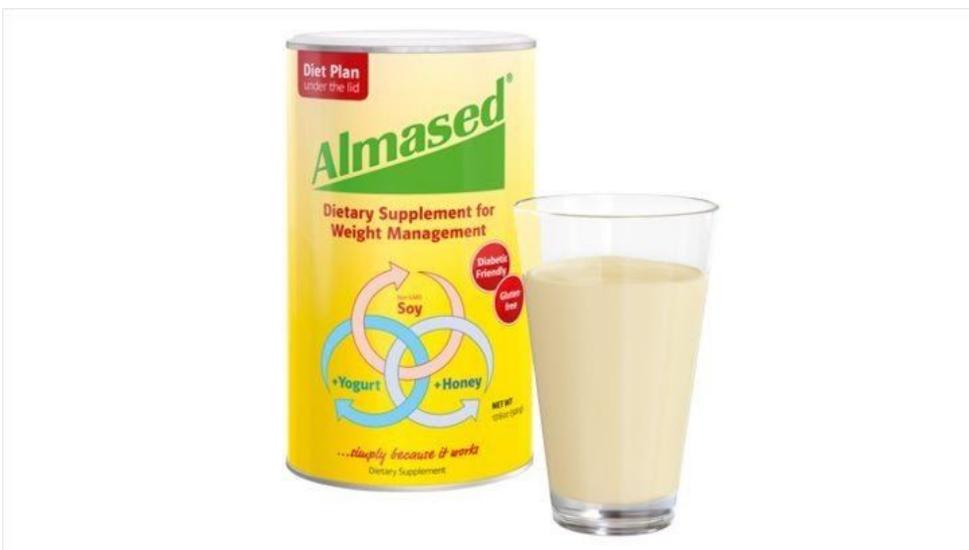
plan. It's also gluten-free, and the company notes it's suitable for [lactose intolerance](#), making it a good choice for people with these [dietary concerns](#).

"With 16 grams (g) of protein, 7 g of fat, and only 16 g of [carbohydrate](#) (about 1 carb exchange), this is a great fit for someone trying to lose weight and manage their blood sugar," says Laura Cipullo, RD, CDE, of Laura Cipullo Whole Nutrition Services in New York City. "This nutrition profile is one of the better options available to individuals trying to find a diabetes-friendly shake."

Nutrition Information

- 190 calories
- 16g protein
- 16g total carbs
- 7g fat (1g saturated fat)
- 4g sugar
- 3g fiber

Almased Meal Replacement Drink Is Made From Soy Protein



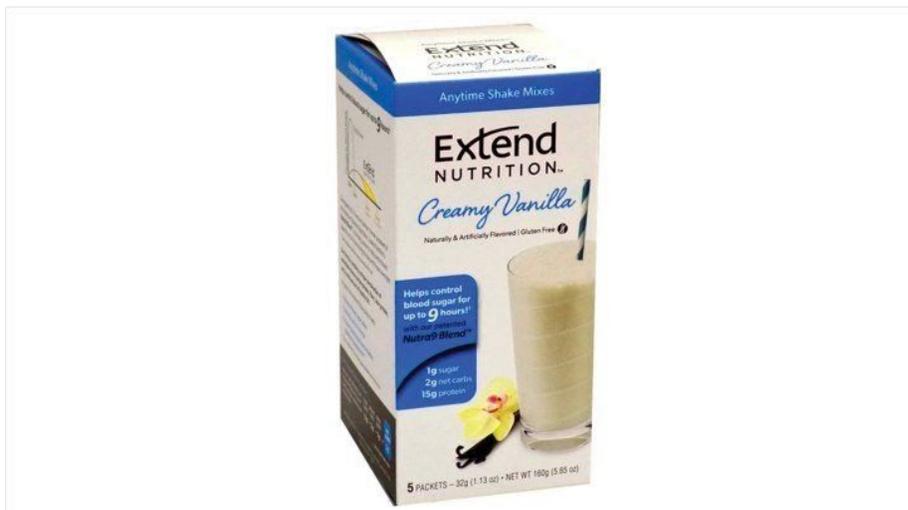
Almased is a meal-replacement drink mix made from soy protein, honey enzymes, and skim-milk yogurt powder. Because it's a powder, if you mix it with any liquid other than water, you'll need to factor in those nutrients. "This shake has a higher amount of sugars, but the total carbohydrate is reasonable," Ramsetty says. It also has a low glycemic index of 27 — and an even lower [glycemic load](#) of 4.

The soy and yogurt give it one of the highest protein contents among shakes for diabetes. "If you don't have [kidney disease](#) and are looking for soy replacements, this would be an option to try," Ramsetty adds. It's also likely to be more satisfying because of its high protein content. Cipullo says, "This is likely to keep you full longer than other meal replacements while helping achieve better blood glucose control" — a plus for type 2 diabetes management.

Nutrition Information

- 180 calories
- 27g protein
- 15g total carbs
- 1g fat (0.5g saturated fat)
- 15g sugar
- 0.5g fiber

Extend Nutrition Shakes Help Control Blood Sugar



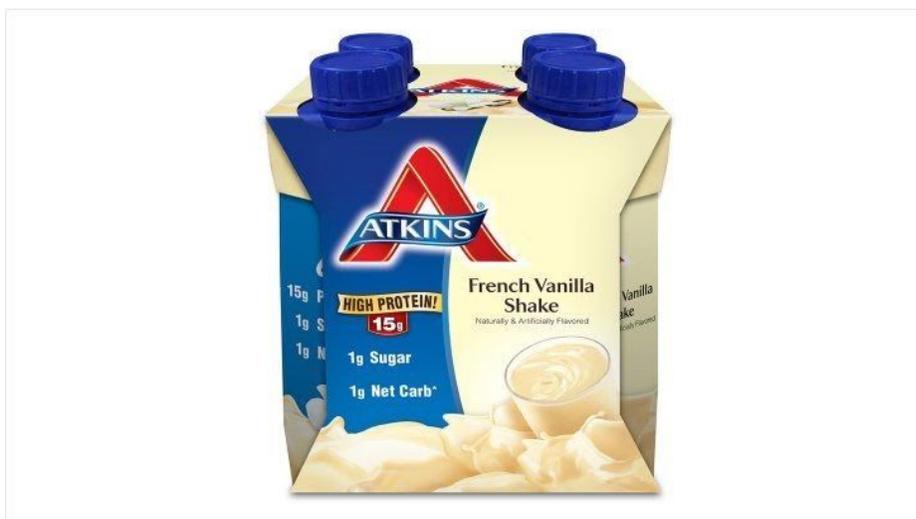
Extend Nutrition Shakes were developed by [Francine Ratner Kaufman, MD](#), former president of the American Diabetes Association and now chief medical officer and vice president of global medical, clinical, and health affairs at Medtronic Diabetes, a medical technology company based in Northridge, California. These protein shakes for people with diabetes are formulated with a combination of fats, proteins, and carbohydrates that metabolize slowly and help control blood sugar for up to nine hours — good for type 2 diabetes management.

Extend Nutrition Shakes come in Simply Strawberry, Rich Chocolate, and Creamy Vanilla flavors, and you just add water or skim milk to the powder packet. Ramsetty says this [meal replacement](#) option is “great in terms of low-calorie load,” and “carbohydrate content is among the lowest, so for those looking for a true low-carb option, this may be one to try.”

Nutrition Information

- 110 calories
- 15g protein
- 12g total carbs
- 1.5g fat (0g saturated fat)
- 1g sugar
- 5g dietary fiber

Atkins Shakes Are Ideal for Restricting Carbs



[Atkins](#) shakes, from the creators of the [Atkins Diet](#), are marketed as a snack or light meal replacement. Flavors of Atkins shakes include Cookies and Creme, Café Caramel, [Dark Chocolate](#) Royale, Vanilla, Milk Chocolate Delight, Mocha Latte, and Strawberry. "This [low-carb](#), higher-fat and protein shake is ideal for someone restricting carbohydrates, or someone with diabetes," Cipullo says.

"With almost 2 servings of fat and protein each, and almost 0 carbohydrates, this shake should not have much effect on [blood sugar](#)," she adds. Still, Cipullo cautions that carb-free does not mean calorie-free — an important consideration for type 2 diabetes management. "If you continually drink these supplements thinking they are okay because they are basically carb-free, you will be fooling yourself, and may gain weight." Remember that healthy carbohydrates are an important part of a well-balanced diabetes diet.

Nutrition Information

- 160 calories
- 15g protein
- 5g total carbs (2 g net carbs)
- 9g fat (2.5g saturated fat)
- 1g sugar
- 3g fiber