

MEDICAL TENT REPORT...October Breeze

Glucose Control Support Help for Type 2 Diabetes

Foods That Help With Glucose Control

When a person has diabetes, either their body does not produce enough insulin, or it cannot utilize the insulin correctly causing glucose to accumulate in the blood. High levels of poorly controlled blood glucose can cause a range of symptoms and medical problems from exhaustion to heart disease. One way to help control blood sugar is to eat a healthful diet. Generally, foods and drinks that the body absorbs slowly are best because they do not cause spikes and dips in blood sugar.

The glycemic index (GI) measures the effects of specific foods on blood sugar levels. People looking to control their levels should pick foods with low or medium GI scores.

Included are some of the best foods to help maintain healthy blood sugar levels.

1. Whole wheat or pumpernickel bread

Many kinds of bread are high in carbohydrates and quickly raise blood sugar levels. As a result many breads should be avoided. However, pumpernickel bread and 100 percent stone-ground whole wheat bread have low GI scores, at 55 or less on the GI scale because the ingredients go through less processing which removes the fibrous outer shells of grains and cereals. Fiber slows digestion and helps to stabilize blood sugar levels.

2. Most fruits

Except for pineapples and melons, most fruits have low GI scores of 55 or less. This is because most fruits contain lots of water and fiber to balance out their naturally occurring sugar, which is called fructose. However, as fruits ripen, their GI scores increase. Fruit juices also have very high GI scores because juicing removes the fibrous skins and seeds. A large 2013 study of the incidence of diabetes found that people who consumed whole fruits, especially blueberries, grapes, and apples, had significantly lower risks of developing type 2 diabetes.

3. Sweet potatoes and yams

Regular potatoes have a high GI score, but sweet potatoes and yams have low scores and are very nutritious. Some research indicates that the flesh of the sweet potato contains more fiber than the skin, indicating that the whole vegetable could be beneficial for those with diabetes. Findings of an animal study also noted that sweet potato consumption may lower some markers of diabetes. While there is still no conclusive evidence that sweet potatoes can help to stabilize or lower blood sugar levels in humans, they are undoubtedly a healthful, nutritious food with a low GI score.

4. Oatmeal and oat bran

Oats have a GI score of 55 or lower, making them less likely to cause spikes and dips in blood sugar levels. Oats also contain B-glucans, which can reduce glucose and insulin responses after meals, improve insulin sensitivity, help maintain glycemic control, and reduce blood lipids. A 2015 review of 16 related studies concluded that oats have a beneficial effect on glucose control and lipid profiles in people with type 2 diabetes. It is recommended, however, that people with diabetes limit their consumption of oatmeal because 1 cup contains roughly 28 grams of carbohydrates.

5. Most nuts

Nuts are very rich in dietary fiber and have GI scores of 55 or less. Nuts also contain high levels of plant proteins, unsaturated fatty acids, and other nutrients, including antioxidant vitamins, flavonoids, and minerals, including magnesium and potassium. It is best when snacking to eat nuts that are whole and unprocessed.

6. Legumes

Legumes, such as beans, peas, chickpeas, and lentils, have very low GI scores. They are also a good source of nutrients that can help maintain healthy blood sugar levels. These nutrients include fiber, complex carbohydrates, and protein. A 2012 study found that incorporating legumes into the diet improved glycemic control and lowered the risk of coronary heart disease in people with type 2 diabetes. Legume products that contain added sugars and simple starches, such as those in syrups, sauces, or marinades should be avoided. These additions can significantly increase a product's GI score.

7. Garlic

Garlic is a popular ingredient in traditional medicines for diabetes and a wide variety of other conditions. The compounds in garlic may help reduce blood sugar by improving insulin

sensitivity and secretion. In a 2013 study, 60 people with type 2 diabetes and obesity took either metformin alone or a combination of metformin and garlic twice daily after meals for 12 weeks. People who took metformin and garlic saw a more significant reduction in their fasting and post-meal blood sugar levels.

8. Cold-water fish

Fish and other meats do not have GI scores because they do not contain carbohydrates. However, cold-water fish may help manage or prevent diabetes better than other types of meat. A 2014 study included data taken from 33,704 Norwegian women over a 5-year period. The researchers found that eating 75–100 grams of cod, haddock, or pollock daily reduced the risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the study group.

In addition to physician prescribed medications and the above, there are other ways to assist in lowering blood sugar levels. These include eating a healthful, well-balanced diet, staying hydrated by drinking plenty of clear liquids, exercising regularly, eating small portions more frequently without skipping meals, and maintain a healthy body weight.

As always, if you have type 2 diabetes, speak with your doctor about how to incorporate a healthful diet into your diabetes care plan.