

# Blood Sugar Balance



A diet high in refined carbohydrates can lead to problems with maintaining stable blood sugar levels, which can often leave you feeling exhausted. Sugar (glucose specifically) is our primary source of energy. The body responds to high levels of glucose in the blood by releasing insulin from the pancreas to help glucose into the cells. Different types of carbohydrates affect blood sugar levels in varying ways. Highly processed, sugar and fat-laden foods are often broken down quickly and cause a spike in blood glucose levels. Additionally, as they aren't nourishing you in the way your body needs, you are often left feeling hungry soon after. Whereas sugar from fruit, starchy vegetables and a little raw honey or a Medjool date or two will provide your brain with the glucose it needs, but will not cause the same spike in blood sugar levels.

Continual spikes in glucose and insulin from eating the "wrong" type of carbohydrates will leave you lacking in energy, and in more serious cases can lead to insulin resistance, which is one of the key risk factors in developing type II diabetes. In addition, high insulin and glucose levels have been linked to low level inflammation, which is damaging and may play a role in numerous chronic conditions.

The following suggestions are aimed at anyone who feels their body isn't getting them through the day without the need for all those biscuits and that afternoon snooze!

**Become a Grazer:** The most important thing you can do is to eat small meals at regular intervals. Three meals a day won't cut it. If you like to have a proper meal then do have three main meals, but cut the portions and make sure you snack in between. The ideal is to have something, no matter how small, every 90 minutes to 2 hours max. It doesn't have to be more than an apple, as long as it's enough to give your brain what it needs to keep your energy levels stable. See the table below for more snack ideas. Eating this way will also help with cravings for processed foods that you may have relied on in the past to keep going. in between smaller sized meals. You don't need to eat this way forever, but for long enough that your body is able to maintain a level of balance.

**Eat a Rainbow!** A diet packed with fruit and vegetables provides numerous benefits, beyond the glucose needed for our brains and nervous system to function. Fruit and vegetables are loaded with phytonutrients, that help protect us in all sorts of ways. Furthermore, their high soluble fibre content helps create a slower, steadier rise in blood sugar levels after a meal or snack.



**Exercise is Key:** Even a small amount of vigorous exercise can help control the amount of glucose, as well as fatty acids, in our bloodstream. Too much fat in the blood will make it more difficult for glucose to enter the cells, where it is needed for energy production.

However, you don't need to hit the gym every day, and frankly this isn't possible if you are tired all the time. To start with, try a brisk, daily walk. Buy yourself a pedometer and build up to 10000 steps a day. Or mix it up with a couple of swims or yoga sessions during the week.

**Recognise Your Stressors:** Whilst a certain level of stress is perfectly healthy, and actually helps us be more productive, many people seem to live off adrenalin – not quite so healthy! High stress levels have a huge impact on blood sugar stability, or lack of, and often leave people either wanting to grab the first sugary snack possible or going for hours without eating anything at all. Neither are good for stable energy levels and will add extra stress to your body.

However, it's not helpful to simply tell people to reduce their stress levels as we don't always have control over the stressors. But we can start by realising that stress is often due to how we are viewing a situation, rather than the situation itself. Not always, but in many cases. Most people will always find something to worry about, which over time does have an impact on overall health. Finding ways to reduce stress is a life-long project, but one that is worth committing to!



## Snack Ideas

**Simply fruit** – you don't always need to go for the complicated option. With the variety of fruit we have access to, it's not hard to keep it interesting.

**Chop some veggies** and have with a mini pot of hummus

**2 Medjool dates** or 5 dried apricots – go for organic varieties, with no added preservatives

**A few tablespoons of coconut yoghurt** – if you want to take them time then put it in a bowl with a little chopped fruit.

**Make yourself a fresh juice** using a stalk of celery, a hunk of cucumber, one apple, a lemon or lime and an inch of ginger. If you don't have time (or like me, can't always be bothered) then you can buy freshly made juices. If you buy them from supermarkets then go for ones such as Savse, which use a process that retains much of the nutrient value.

A small smoothie – again you can buy these in most food shops, or make one at home with a banana, handful of blueberries, a small handful of baby leaf spinach and a splash of coconut water.

*Sources and further information: [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk), [www.chrisskresser.com/diabetes](http://www.chrisskresser.com/diabetes), [www.medicalmedium.com](http://www.medicalmedium.com)*