Keeping glucose levels in the target range during the day is important. To do so, it's important to know which foods affect glucose. Carbohydrates directly affect glucose levels, causing them to rise. Other nutrients in food indirectly affect glucose levels and should also be taken into consideration.

Foods That Directly Affect Glucose Levels

Carbohydrates (carbs) directly affect glucose levels. Some examples of carbohydrates include:

- Grains, such as bread, cereal, rice and pasta
- Starchy vegetables, such as peas, corn and potatoes
- Fruit
- Some dairy, including milk and yogurt
- Sweets such as cookies, cake, and candy

Foods That Indirectly Affect Glucose Levels

Protein (like meat, chicken, fish and eggs) and fats (like butter, oil and margarine) do not contain carbohydrates, so they don't directly affect your glucose levels. However, if they are eaten with carbs, they can change how rapidly glucose levels rise by slowing down digestion.

Sugar Free Foods are Not Carb Free Foods

Sugar-free doesn't mean carbohydrate-free. Grains, sweets, and dairy products that are labeled as "sugar-free" are typically still high in carbohydrate even though no sugar has been added. Always check the food label to find out how many carbohydrate grams are in each serving of food. In addition, sugar-free products often contain artificial sweeteners and sugar alcohols. While artificial sweeteners do not raise glucose levels, sugar alcohols still do, just not as much as other carbohydrates.

Fat Free Foods are Not Always Healthier

Fat-free products such as muffins and cereals, for example, are typically still high in carbohydrates (and calories) as they not only contain carbohydrates from grains but also from large amounts of added sugar.

Reviewed by Amy Aponick, MPH, RDN, LDN, CDE, 3/11/19

This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

Recommended

Understanding Carbs

Reading a Nutritional Label

What Can I Feed My Child Today?

What Can I Drink?

Low Carb Snack Ideas

Sources

How Foods Affect Blood Glucose: Glycemic Impact — ADA

Carbs, Protein, and Fats – Their Effects on Glucose Levels – Joslin Diabetes Center

How Does Fiber Affect Blood Glucose Levels? — Joslin Diabetes Center

Impact of Diet Composition on Blood Glucose Regulation — PubMed

Sugar Substitutes and Non-Nutritive Sweeteners – Cleveland Clinic

Eat Any Sugar Alcohol Lately? – Yale New Haven Hospital