

Healthy Eating Advice - Raised Blood Sugar

Following a low Glycaemic Index (GI) diet is an effective way to help control blood sugar levels through healthy eating. This system rates foods according to their overall effect on blood glucose levels, with low GI foods being absorbed more slowly into the blood-stream and making you feel full for longer. It has been shown that consuming more foods which have a lower GI rating can be helpful in achieving a healthier lifestyle. This can be especially useful in helping to prevent or control long-term conditions such as diabetes.

It is important to remember however that a low GI food is not necessarily healthy as it may contain high levels of fat. Equally, it is not necessary to completely avoid high GI foods as it is the overall balance of the meal which is important. **High GI foods should be combined with a low GI food to make a medium GI meal if possible.**

Many common foods have a low GI rating so this system can be easily used to help you achieve a healthier lifestyle, for example:-

- oat-based products,
- muesli-style breakfast cereals,
- many fruits and most vegetables,
- many dairy products,
- pulses,
- wholegrain bread,
- pasta,
- long-grain rice.

Eating a healthy diet will help you to control your blood sugar levels. It is important to eat regular meals, for most people this means 3 meals per day. These should contain complex carbohydrates such as those suggested above and a variety of fruit and vegetables. When choosing fruit and vegetables it is helpful to remember that by selecting a mixture of colours and choosing darker coloured varieties where possible, you increase the range and content of vitamins and minerals in your diet. You should aim to eat at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day, which can be fresh, frozen or canned.

You should avoid too many sugary foods and drinks, as these will be rapidly absorbed and raise your blood sugar levels too quickly. When checking labels is important to remember that sugar may also be listed as glucose, glucose syrup, dextrose, fructose, sucrose, etc.

It is important to try to keep your body-weight within recommended limits because the insulin your body requires to control blood glucose levels is less effective in overweight individuals. If you are over-weight even small reductions (e.g. 5-10% of body-weight) can have a significant health benefit – helping to reduce e.g. blood pressure and cardiovascular risk.

Portion sizes are very important in helping to achieve a healthy lifestyle. If portion sizes are too large your body must work harder to digest the meal and it will be more difficult to achieve or maintain your recommended weight.

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