

Nutrition News

Blood Sugar Basics

Your body's main source of energy is the glucose or sugar in your blood. To help maintain a healthy blood glucose level, your body needs to properly use the hormone insulin. Without that control, you may develop type 2 diabetes, a disorder that can cause serious health problems.

Borderline diabetes is called prediabetes – it's diagnosed when blood glucose levels are moderately high but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. Having prediabetes is a wake-up call. However, you may not have any symptoms, so it's best to learn the risk factors:

- Excess weight, especially belly fat
- High blood pressure
- HDL cholesterol under 35
- Lack of exercise
- Family history of diabetes
- History of diabetes during pregnancy
- Ethnic background (African, Hispanic, Native or Asian American, Pacific Islander)

When should you be tested? If you're **over age 45**, ask your health care provider during a routine visit if you need a blood glucose test. If you're **younger than 45 and have any of the risk factors** listed above for diabetes and prediabetes, ask your provider about testing.

These 2 steps may cut your diabetes risk by half:

1. Lose 7% of your body weight (that's 14 pounds if you weigh 200).
2. Exercise moderately (such as brisk walking) 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.

Even if you can't get to your ideal body weight, losing just 10 to 15 pounds can improve your body's use of insulin – the key to healthy blood sugar.

Get Past Your Weight-Loss Plateau

You've started exercising and eating right with great results.

Then, after a few months, your body reaches a plateau and you stop losing weight.



“Still at a plateau, Mrs. Johnson?”

Why? One theory: After performing the same activity for long periods, your body uses fewer calories than when you first started the activity, and it's harder to lose weight. To reach your goal weight, you need to continually update your fitness routine. Here are some tips:

Boost your cardio workout. Add brief intervals of higher-intensity exercise during your routine moderate workout. For example, speed walk for 5 minutes every 10 minutes during your walk.

Add 2 to 3 strength-training workouts a week. Strength building increases your muscle density and metabolism. Increasing your lean muscle mass will ultimately help you lose both fat and inches.

Vary your exercise activities. Regularly using a variety of muscles adds muscle mass, which raises your metabolism. Beyond the same old machine workout, for example, try swimming or racket sports.

“One way to get the most out of life is to look upon it as an adventure.” –William Feather

3 Nutrients: Are you Getting Enough?

Even the best diet can fall short of certain key nutrients. These include iron, vitamin D and calcium. Here's what you need to know:

Iron deficiency is most common in women, children and teenage girls.

Solution: To improve iron absorption, match plant-based iron-rich foods (leafy green, legumes, and nuts) with items that are high in vitamin C. For example, try spinach and strawberry salad or sweet pepper and kale stir-fry.

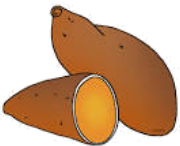
Vitamin D may protect against osteoporosis, type 2 diabetes, hypertension and certain types of cancer. This vitamin is found in few foods, so deficiency is common.

Solution: Drinking fortified milk daily and eating a few servings of fish weekly help, but may not be enough. Discuss your vitamin D needs with your health care provider.

Calcium Keep your bones healthy. In the U.S. teenage girls and adults older than age 50 are most likely to fall short of their calcium needs.

Solution: Include 3 to 4 servings of milk products each day. Try milk, low-fat cheese and yogurt. Or get calcium from leafy greens, canned salmon or sardines, and fortified milk alternatives.

Source: TOP Health



Eat more orange vegetables

Carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, and winter squash

Sweet potatoes have lots of vitamin A.

Bake a sweet potato and top with:

- Chopped ham and cooked broccoli.
- Cooked broccoli and carrots, and shredded cheddar cheese.
- Cooked turkey or chicken chunks.
- Applesauce and dash of cinnamon.

Carrots

Add shredded carrots to:

- Lettuce salads
- Breads and muffins
- Soups
- Meatballs and meatloaf
- Sandwiches
- Tacos



Source: Nutrition Matters, Inc.

Top 10 Ways to Enjoy Sweet Potatoes

10. **A Crispy, *Healthy* Snack.** Try munching on sweet potato chips. Thinly slice a large sweet potato and brush lightly with olive oil. Bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until lightly browned and crisp.
9. **Just Drizzle and Eat!** Dice cooked, peeled sweet potatoes and drizzle with maple syrup for a side dish that's sure to satisfy any sweet tooth.
8. **Add a Twist to Your Sandwiches.** Cut thin slices of cooked sweet potatoes and add to your favorite sandwich or wrap instead of tomatoes.
7. **Sweet Potato Pancakes!** Breakfast is sure to be a hit when you make sweet potato pancakes.
6. **The New Potato Salad.** Substitute sweet potatoes for regular spuds in your favorite potato salad recipe.
5. **Grill'em!** Slice sweet potatoes into thick ½ inch rounds and grill until lightly browned. Drizzle with lime juice.
4. **Sweet Potato Fries.** Sweet potato fries make a delicious treat. Quarter sweet potatoes and drizzle with olive oil. Bake at 400 degrees for 40-60 minutes. For a spicy twist, add a dash of cayenne pepper.
3. **Top Your Salad.** Sweet potatoes make sweet salad toppings. Combine diced sweet potatoes, pineapple tidbits, apples, celery, and cashews. Serve over salad greens.
2. **Mash'em!** Steam peeled sweet-potato chunks for about 10 minutes until tender, and mash with a dash of orange juice.
1. **Bake, Roast, or Steam'em!** Pick a cooking method and enjoy! Use whole, unpeeled sweet potatoes as a side dish to any meal.

Fruit & Vegetables More Matters

Judy Groce Neel

Groce Neel, Extension Area Specialist III

Nutrition Educator: Karen Savino



Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program