

Foods to balance blood sugar

Different kinds of food can impact blood sugars in various ways. Choosing the right kinds can help to keep your levels balanced Benefits of a healthy weight:

All about carbohydrates

Carbohydrates—with fats and proteins—make up the energy in the food you eat. Carbs are broken down into sugar during digestion and then absorbed into the blood stream.¹

Some carbs are healthy while others aren't. Healthy carbs provide energy to fuel the body along with other vital nutrients. Unhealthy carbs may increase your risk of weight gain, diabetes, and heart disease.¹

Classifying carbs

Your body turns all carbohydrates into energy, but they are not all created equal. Foods are made up of simple or complex carbs.²

Simple carbs	Complex carbs
Simple carbs are absorbed quickly because they're easy for the body to break down. They are often found in foods with lots of sugar and may add extra calories with little nutritional value.	Complex carbs have a lot of fiber and digest slowly because they're harder to break down. They often come from whole plant foods and have vitamins and minerals.

Food and blood sugar

According to American Diabetes Association, most carbohydrates are converted into glucose (or sugar) during digestion.³ After the carbohydrates are converted, this glucose enters the bloodstream and causes blood sugar levels to rise. Normally, the pancreas would produce insulin; this hormone prompts the body's cells to absorb glucose for energy. However, in someone with diabetes, the glucose stays in the blood for longer than it should.

Effects of too much sugar

According to the Harvard Health, Americans take in about 17 teaspoons of added sugar daily.⁴ Added sugars add extra calories but offer little nutritional value.



Consuming too much added sugar may have negative impacts on your health. Research shows that it may be linked to:

- **Weight gain**⁵
- **Heart disease**⁵
- **Tooth decay**⁵
- **Cancer**⁶

Swap unhealthy carbs for healthy ones

There are many ways to reduce unhealthy options and incorporate high-quality carbs into your diet. Some simple swaps can help you trade high-carb foods for low-carb options.

Instead of...	Consider...
Low-fat yogurt	Cottage cheese
Fruit smoothie	Fresh whole fruit
Snack mix	Mixed nuts
White rice	Barley or quinoa
White pasta	Spaghetti squash
Dried fruit	Dark chocolate

What is a superfood?

Superfood is a term used to promote a food thought to have health benefits. While there is no official definition of a superfood, they are often rich in healthy, disease-fighting nutrients like:^{7,8}

- **Vitamins**
- **Minerals**
- **Antioxidants**
- **Fiber**

Diabetes superfoods⁹

1. **Berries** – Contain antioxidants, vitamins, and fiber.
2. **Dark green leafy vegetables** – Low in carbs, high in vitamins and fiber.
3. **Beans** – High in fiber and protein.
4. **Citrus fruits** – High in fiber and vitamin C.
5. **Fish** – High in omega-3 fatty acids.
6. **Nuts** – Contain healthy fat and protein.
7. **Sweet potatoes** – High in vitamin A and fiber.
8. **Whole grains** – Rich in vitamins and fiber.

- 9. **Tomatoes** – Low in carbs and high in vitamins.
- 10. **Milk and yogurt** – Contain calcium and vitamin D.

Balancing blood sugar with food choices

Choosing complex carbohydrates may help keep your energy levels steady, make you feel full longer, and it can also help to keep your blood sugars balanced.

Consider these tips to get the right kind of carbs:

- **Look for whole grains.** Look for “whole” on the ingredients list and check for fiber.
- **Pick fresh fruits and veggies.** Get a wide variety and try to include some of the items from the superfood list.
- **Balance your meals and snacks.** Pair sugar with protein, fiber, and healthy fats to help slow digestion.

**What are your three favorite foods from the “diabetes superfoods” list?
How can you incorporate them into new recipes?**

Notes

References

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