

Reducing Your Glucose Level

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If you've recently been diagnosed as a diabetic or been told that your blood glucose levels are high, then monitoring them will become an important, life-long process. Diabetes and high blood glucose levels can lead to premature death, can seriously damage organs and contribute to other diseases. Learning how to reduce glucose levels through diet and [exercise](#) in conjunction with medications can be challenging at first, but will become second nature after a short time.

Normal Blood Glucose Levels

Glucose in your blood is an important source of fuel for the body. It is so important that your body uses a series of built-in mechanisms to regulate its level. The normal blood glucose concentration for healthy individuals is between 70 to 100 mg/dl. High blood glucose levels (called hyperglycemia) over time can damage the lining of your arteries, accelerate atherosclerosis and contribute to kidney failure, blindness and even loss of limb.

During the day, blood glucose levels will temporarily rise and fall, depending on what you eat and your physical activity. For instance, immediately after a meal rich in simple carbohydrates, your glucose level could rise to over 130 mg/dl. On the other hand, your glucose can drop below 70 after prolonged exercise, leaving you lightheaded and irritable.

As long as your glucose levels return to normal levels within an hour or two, it's nothing to be concerned about. However, if your blood glucose remains outside the normal ranges for extended periods of time, it's a good idea to speak with your physician and have him order a blood glucose test for you.

Determining Blood Glucose Levels

A comprehensive blood test is part of most annual physical examinations. Measuring your blood glucose is one component of the test. It's important to fast for at least 12 hours before your blood test to ensure that you'll be getting accurate information. Any [foods](#) eaten containing carbohydrates immediately before your blood test could produce abnormally high blood glucose levels and invalidate the test. Use the results from this glucose test as your baseline measurement and compare it with the values from last year and blood tests in the future.

Approaching High Blood Glucose

If your doctor determines your blood glucose is high, there are a number of approaches he'll suggest that include changing your diet, adding exercise to your daily routine and taking medications to lower your glucose levels.

Chances are, he'll take a more conservative approach in the beginning and have you meet with a registered dietitian to help you eliminate foods from your diet that could be raising your glucose levels.

At the same time, your doctor may suggest that you begin adding exercise to your daily routine. Twenty to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise every day consumes blood glucose and helps to lower high concentrations.

If diet and exercise are not enough to lower your blood glucose levels, your doctor may prescribe medications to lower your blood glucose.

Reducing Glucose Through the Diet

Diet has an important effect on the blood glucose levels. Meals that are rich in carbohydrates will cause blood glucose levels to skyrocket.

Meeting with a registered dietitian will help you decide which areas of your diet need the most attention. They will help you identify the difference between simple and complex carbohydrates--foods that raise blood glucose levels, but in different ways. By learning how to properly combine simple with complex carbohydrates, you may be able to reduce your blood glucose levels through

simple changes in your diet.

You'll also learn about the importance of the glycemic index (GI) of carbohydrates. The GI is a rating system of foods that tells you how fast they will raise your blood glucose levels. The lower the GI, the better. For instance, one serving of cherries has a GI of 22. A serving of orange juice has a GI of 46. A serving of dried dates has a GI of 103.

Your dietitian will give you tips on how to combine carbohydrates with protein and fat. Foods that are rich in protein and fat serve to counter the effects of carbohydrates on blood glucose levels. They'll teach you the importance of balancing your meals to help you achieve stable glucose levels.

Chances are you won't have to give up all of your favorite foods. However, learning how to balance simple carbohydrates with complex and paying attention to the GI of foods will substantially lower your blood glucose levels.

Adding Exercise to Your Day

Exercise is another important way to manage your blood glucose levels. As you exercise, your muscles will consume glucose that's circulating in the blood.

And, since your muscles remain metabolically active even hours after you've finished, [exercising](#) is an ideal way to naturally lower your blood glucose levels.

Choose a form of aerobic activity that uses large muscle groups and is something you enjoy doing. Schedule 20 to 30 minutes of aerobic exercise every day. If possible, try to exercise at the same time every day and schedule your meals and medications around it. This will help your physician evaluate the effectiveness of your program.

Medications to Manage Blood Glucose

If you're a type I diabetic or all of the other approaches have failed to manage your blood glucose, your physician may prescribe insulin or other medications to lower your glucose levels. Insulin is injected into the body at prescribed intervals to take the place of what your body should be doing on its own. If you're a type II diabetic, you may be prescribed oral medications to make your body more sensitive to insulin and assist with glucose uptake.

You'll need to learn how to combine diet, exercise and medications for the best results. Overdoing any one of the three or going too long without them can result in serious consequences. Eventually, you'll fall into patterns and learn when to eat, exercise and take your medications.

Resources

- [Glycemic Index of Popular Foods](#)