



National Diabetes Awareness Month

Managing Diabetes this Holiday Season!

Even though the holiday season is a very special time of the year, it can also be a challenging period of time when trying to manage diabetes. All of the extra activities, social gatherings and schedule changes can cause many unexpected stresses to be placed on the body. Therefore, it is important to start planning now how you are going to manage this holiday season so that you are able to keep up with the holiday spirit!

1) **Set Realistic Expectations:**

Prepare yourself mentally and physically to expect your blood glucose to fluctuate with the excitement of the holidays. Know before this time of year that you will need to focus on putting more energy into finding solutions, rather than allowing the problem of undesired blood glucose levels overwhelm you. It is first important to understand that your participation and interaction with certain holiday activities may look different than those around you-monitoring food, keeping steady blood glucose levels, administering insulin and keeping a more regular routine so that you feel in control of your health. Not only is comprehending your current health state significant, but also knowing your blood glucose can be managed by planning ahead and implementing some simple preventative tips.

2) **Maintain a Routine:**

It is crucial to maintain a regular routine of blood sugar checks and insulin administration even amidst the additional activities and schedule changes associated with the holiday season. Keeping a set schedule will help monitor and reduce the impact of the holidays on your health, which will allow you to continue participating in all of the fun activities. It may be helpful to keep a blood glucose journal, as well as setting reminders on your phone, watch or computer so that you do not miss taking medications, watching our blood sugar levels and administering insulin.

3) **Food Extravaganzas:**

Most holiday parties and social gatherings are centered around food. Therefore, when you are invited to a party offer to bring a healthy dish along, or a back up snack option for yourself. This is crucial so that you do not completely skip a meal and disrupt your blood sugar control. If you do happen to slip up at one party, get right back to healthy eating with your next meal.

4) **Stay in Control:**

What should you do during the moments when you are unable to plan ahead and bring healthy alternative food options, yet are faced with a spread of delicious holiday food? Start with vegetables, to take the edge off of your hunger. Then proceed to fill a small plate of the foods you like best, striving to pass on high carbohydrate and sugary options. You are ultimately the one in control of your plate and knowing which foods are best in correspondence with your current blood sugar level. Lastly, slow down and savor, allowing your brain to realize you are full.



5) **Plan Different Holiday Activities:**

Plan activities that are non-food related, and instead are active events to enjoy with family and friends. For example, creating artwork, going for a hike, building snowmen & having snowball fights, skiing or snowboarding, karaoke competition, Christmas caroling, going out and serving others, or taking an evening walk after dinner.

6) **Traveling:**

Often the holidays require lots of extra traveling to visit various family members and friends. Making it important to remember to stock up and pack extra supplies, such as a medical alert identification, hypoglycemia kit, snacks, and other essential personal items. Additionally, if traveling to a foreign county keep in mind the time change, jet lag, different foods and not all of the same resources. It is always better to be over prepared than un-prepared when traveling because you never know if you will be delayed, un-able to get to a convenience store or what your daily routine will consist of.

7) **Get enough Sleep:**

With the increase of holiday activities and changing schedules it can be more difficult to get the proper amount of sleep. More specifically, sleep loss can make it more challenging to control your blood sugar due to the higher amount of stress, as well as the increased tendency to eat more high-fat and high-sugar food items. Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night to help prevent mindless eating, high stress and maintaining blood sugar levels.

8) **Enjoy the Holidays:**

This season is truly about celebrating and connecting with the people you care about and love. The key focus should be on spending quality time together with family and friends, and collecting lots of special memories that will last for years to come. That is why by following these simple tips to better prepare yourself for this holiday season will help you fully enjoy and cherish all the moments!

Health Tip:

Managing Blood Glucose Levels

Properly managing blood glucose levels can be a daily challenge, especially if your schedule consists of a wide variety of activities, different environments and/or is constantly changing. If you prepare yourself in advance though, you will be ready to face any change or last minute activity!

Stock up on healthy food options to have on hand at home, as well as in your car, purse, backpack, office, gym bag etc... Not only is having a wide variety of food options important, but also knowing how many grams of carbohydrates are in each item. Eating around 45-60 grams of carbohydrates at a meal is a good baseline to build from, due to the fact that everyone is very different in the amount of carbohydrates he or she needs.

Before exercising or any extra strenuous activity try to intake around 30 grams of carbohydrates, and then while exercising or after (depending on the duration of exercise) intake 15 grams of carbohydrates to make sure your blood glucose does not drop too far below 100mg/dl. Always continue to monitor your blood glucose levels throughout the day so that you can modify insulin doses and possibly intake more carbohydrates.

Lastly, a quick and easy tip to remember is the “**15-15 Rule**.” If you feel or suspect a low or if your glucose reading is less than 70 mg/dl, eat or drink **15 Grams** of a fast-acting carbohydrate source (glucose gel, liquid ect...). Then wait **15 Minutes** for your body to absorb the glucose into your bloodstream. **Check** your blood glucose. If the level is still less than 70 mg/dl, eat or drink another 15 grams of carbohydrate. **Repeat** as needed until your blood glucose level rises above 70 mg/dl.

Snacks based on how much carbohydrates they contain:

Less than 5 grams of Carbohydrates:

- 15 almonds
- 3 celery sticks + 1 TBSP of peanut butter
- 5 baby carrots
- 1 hard boiled egg
- ¼ cup of fresh blueberries
- 1 cup of light popcorn
- 1 piece of string cheese
- ¼ of a whole avocado
- 10-20 Grams of Carbohydrates
- ¼ cup dried fruit and nut mix
- 1 small apple or orange
- ¼ cup dried fruit and nut mix
- 1 small apple or orange
- ¼ cup tuna salad + 4 crackers
- 30 Grams of Carbohydrate (Excellent before you exercise)
- 6oz yogurt + ¾ cup of berries
- 1 medium banana + 1TBSP peanut butter



Exercise of the Month:

Any form of exercise may that be strength training, stretching or aerobic exercise is extremely beneficial for those with diabetes. Exercise directly strengthens the heart and bones, helps relieve stress, boosts blood circulation, reduces the risk of heart disease by lowering blood glucose and blood pressure, as well as improves cholesterol levels.

What is the TOP form of exercise for diabetes? Even though all exercise is beneficial, aerobic exercise is the most impactful for those with diabetes. Aerobic exercise requires the body to increase its utilization of glucose, which then forces the body to properly use insulin. All encompassing aerobic exercise not only helps with weight loss, improving cardiovascular strength and endurance, but also directly improves insulin resistance.

How much Aerobic Exercise should I do?

It is recommended to aim for 30 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous aerobic exercise at least 5 days a week for a total of 150 minutes per week. If you are trying to lose weight, keep off weight gain or experience more health benefits then you need to do closer to 60 minutes of aerobic activity each day.

If you are just beginning to incorporate exercise into your daily life, then do not push it and start gradually. Begin with 5-10 minute sessions of walking throughout the day. Once that feels fine and progressively easy, increase the length of the walks and how many times throughout the day you are walking. Before you know it you'll be walking the recommended amount of time each week, if not more! Doing shorter bouts of exercise is also more convenient for those with busy schedules that do not allow complete 30 minutes of exercise. Research has shown that the health benefits are similar by breaking up your exercise throughout the day. For example, taking a brisk 10-minute walk in the morning, another 15-minute bout of exercise during lunch and then another exercise session in the evening.

Even though aerobic exercise is the most beneficial for those with diabetes, it is also important to incorporate in addition to aerobic exercise strength training at least 2 times per week, as well as stretching.

Recipe of the Month

Sweet Potato Casserole {Vegan and Gluten-free}

- 3 1/2 pounds sweet potatoes (about 5 medium)
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 2 tablespoons maple syrup
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground nutmeg
- 2 tablespoons orange juice
- 1/2 teaspoon orange zest (optional)

Pecan Topping:

- 1 generous cup whole raw pecans
- 1 tablespoon coconut oil, melted
- 1 tablespoon maple syrup
- 3/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon



Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Pierce the sweet potatoes with a fork and place them on a rimmed baking sheet. Bake them in the oven until they are very soft, 60-90 minutes, depending on their size. Turn the potatoes over once during the baking time.

When the sweet potatoes are finished cooking, allow them to cool. Once they are cool, use a knife to cut open the skin and peel it out. Discard. Put the sweet potato flesh into a large bowl and mash well. Add the next 8 ingredients (through orange zest, if using) and mix well. Place the sweet potato mixture in a 2-quart baking dish.

In a small bowl, mix together the pecans, coconut oil, maple syrup, and cinnamon. Sprinkle or lay the pecans all over the top of the casserole.

Reduce the oven temperature to 350 degrees and bake for 20-25 minutes, until the top is lightly browned. Enjoy!

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