

DIABETES MYTH BUSTERS

Since your diagnosis of Diabetes, you may find friends and family trying to offer you advice and support to help to manage your condition and you may also search online to find out more.

Whilst all advice is well meant, be aware that there are many myths going round about diabetes and foods to help manage blood glucose. This leaflet aims to give you the proven facts around some of these myths.

Never replace your diabetes medication with other treatments.

Please speak to the Diabetes Team for further support.

Myths may be:

- **Social Myths** – beliefs from family, friends, social media etc
- **Marketing Myths** – usually to boost sales of a certain product

Common Myths

“Diabetes is caused by eating too much sugar” - FALSE

Type 1 diabetes isn't caused by diet or lifestyle choices. It happens when the cells that produce insulin in the pancreas are destroyed by the immune system.



It's also not true to say that Type 2 diabetes is caused by sugar directly. However, the chances of developing Type 2 diabetes are greater if you carry excess weight, which can be a consequence of a high sugar diet.

“Type 2 Diabetes is mild diabetes”- FALSE

No type of diabetes is mild. Type 2 diabetes in children and young people is a much more serious condition than if it is developed in adulthood, because the hormones that help children and young people grow, make the condition harder to manage. Well managed weight and blood glucose levels can significantly decrease the risk of the complications in adulthood in both type 1 and type 2 diabetes.

“People with Diabetes should eat diabetic products” – FALSE

Foods labelled as 'diabetic' or suitable for diabetics are not recommended. They still raise blood glucose levels, are hard to carb count, they don't taste as good. They are also expensive, and they may cause diarrhoea. So, if you are going to occasionally have foods high in sugar, it would be better to go for a smaller amount of the real thing, with a meal and review the effect on your blood glucose.

“People with Diabetes cannot eat sugar” - FALSE

For people living with Type 1 diabetes, sugary drinks or glucose tablets are essential to treat a hypo, (when your blood glucose levels get too low) so that blood glucose levels come back up fast.

We can all enjoy eating sugary foods occasionally as part of a healthy balanced diet. However, most of us eat too much of the *added sugar* that harms our health. Too much sugar is bad for your teeth too. The maximum recommended daily amount of sugar are shown below:



1 cube = 1 teaspoon = 4g sugar

4-6yrs = 20g

7-10yrs = 24g

11+yrs = 30g

Given that a tablespoon of ketchup contains around 1 teaspoon of sugar, a chocolate biscuit has up to 2 teaspoons, a 500ml bottle of coke has 13 teaspoons sugar, it is easy for your sugar intake to add up quickly.

Watch out for other sugars such as honey, brown sugar, syrup, agave treacle or gurr (jaggery). They are less processed but will all raise blood glucose fast and should be counted like sugar.

“People with Diabetes cannot eat fruit” - FALSE

People sometimes think that if they have diabetes they can't eat fruit, especially grapes, mangos, pineapple and bananas as they taste sweet. If you eat these fruits with a meal (and insulin if you take it), you can still get in-range blood glucose levels. Every fruit is a very healthy choice. Some fruits are lower in natural sugar and can be eaten as a snack e.g. berries and cherries.



Fruit is high in fibre, low in fat and full of vitamins and minerals. It helps to protect against heart disease, cancer and certain digestive problems, e.g. constipation. Fruit juice is better avoided as it has had the fibre removed and can cause blood glucose levels to rise fast.

“People with diabetes should/shouldn't eat certain carbohydrate foods”- FALSE

Starchy carbs such as rice, chapati, bread, potatoes, pasta are all good sources of nutrients and are better just eaten at mealtimes (with insulin if you take it). Speak to your dietitian about your portion size.

There are also several cultural myths about specific drinks, herbs and foods which would be good to familiarise yourself with. See the YouTube link below for more information:

<https://youtu.be/iOCYsUO2mmY>

Author: Dietetics 01282 804700
Date of issue: September 2022
Version number: 1
Review Date: September 2024
Document ID: PAEDDIAB-001-MYTHBUSTERS-2022