

THE IMPORTANCE OF HEALTHY SUGAR METABOLISM

Achieving and maintaining proper blood sugar metabolism is essential for a lifetime of excellent health. Prolonged unhealthy blood sugar metabolism can significantly affect the health of your nerves, eyes, blood vessels, kidneys and pancreas. It can impact your weight, body shape, energy levels, blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides, overall cardiovascular health and more. Over 60 million Americans have "insulin resistance," a form of unhealthy blood sugar metabolism that frequently goes unrecognized but can often progress to the point where signs of significant health deterioration appear.

Don't let this happen to you! It is never too early or too late to learn how you can achieve and maintain healthy blood sugar metabolism and experience the benefits of sustained good health. The illustration on the reverse side of this sheet was created to help you do just that. By understanding how blood sugar metabolism works, and with the guidance of your healthcare provider, you can take the necessary steps to achieve and enjoy the long lasting benefits of healthy blood sugar metabolism.

Diet, Lifestyle and Healthy Blood Sugar Metabolism

The illustration on the reverse side of this sheet begins by depicting the importance of eating a healthy, nutrient-rich diet containing unrefined carbohydrates from whole foods. Through normal, healthy digestion, the unrefined carbohydrates in our diet are progressively broken down to smaller sugars, which are then absorbed through the intestine into the blood. This sugar absorption stimulates the pancreas to secrete an appropriate quantity of insulin into the blood, which facilitates the delivery of sugar into cells throughout the body.

When insulin binds to insulin receptors embedded in the cell membrane, a signal is sent to sugar transport channel vesicles inside the cell. These vesicles respond to the insulin signal by carrying sugar transport channels ("sugar entryways") to the surface membrane of the cell. The vesicles then fuse with the cell membrane, flatten out and position their sugar transport channels to facilitate effective sugar delivery from the blood into the cell. The sugar then enters the cell and is used for energy production by the mitochondria (the energy factories of the cell) or is stored for future use. The response of the cell to insulin binding and the resultant insulin signal is critical to healthy blood sugar metabolism.

Poor diet, obesity and lack of exercise are considered major contributors to developing poor blood sugar metabolism. Incorporating lifestyle changes that focus on effective weight control, healthy eating habits and a program of regular exercise are very important to promoting healthy blood sugar metabolism.

Factors That Lead to Unhealthy Blood Sugar Metabolism

Over time, inactivity and an unhealthy diet can lead to unhealthy sugar metabolism. When we consume excess sweets and refined or processed foods the simple sugars they contain are absorbed very quickly and can cause a rapid and dramatic increase in our blood sugar levels. With a high concentration of sugar in the blood, the pancreas responds by producing a proportionally high surge of insulin in an effort to help the sugar gain entrance into the cell. In unhealthy blood sugar metabolism, the cell may be unresponsive or "insulin resistant" and sugar delivery into the cell can be reduced. The pancreas then tries to compensate by producing even more insulin. Over time these high levels of insulin can lead to a host of problems, including increased triglyceride levels, decreased HDL ("good") cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, other cardiovascular manifestations and hormone disruption.

This "insulin resistance" may occur because, along with excess sweets and refined carbohydrates, an unhealthy diet is also frequently deficient in the nutrients necessary to support healthy cell membranes, insulin receptors and a strong insulin signal. Unhealthy insulin receptors can result in poor binding of insulin and, in concert with other factors, a diminished insulin signal, thereby reducing sugar delivery into the cell. These other factors include the negative effects of specific enzymes and cytokines, such as phosphotyrosine phosphatases, nuclear factor-kappaB (NF-kappaB), and tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF-alpha).

An unhealthy diet may even alter the way the genetic information within our cells influences blood sugar metabolism. Scientists now know that a poor diet, along with other contributors, can alter our genetic potential or gene expression. Appropriate gene expression is important for healthy blood sugar metabolism because it stimulates sugar utilization by the mitochondria of the cells, producing energy and, in effect, clearing sugar from the blood.

Taken as a whole, excess weight, lack of exercise and an unhealthy diet can reduce the "sensitivity" of your cells to insulin and even impact their genetic expression. Without effective insulin binding and signaling, the sugar transport channel vesicles remain static and unable to travel to and fuse with the cell membrane. As a result, the number of sugar transport channels is reduced, leading to poor cellular sugar absorption and utilization, excess blood sugar and insulin, low energy and a host of other possible manifestations of deteriorating health.

Suggestions to Help Achieve Healthy Blood Sugar Metabolism

As mentioned earlier, implementing a program of regular exercise and effective weight control is important. Following specific dietary guidelines can also have a tremendous effect on your body's ability to establish and maintain healthy blood sugar metabolism.

The dietary guidelines should focus on two primary goals: 1.) Choosing foods that have a moderate effect on raising blood sugar, referred to as "low glycemic index" foods, and 2.) Choosing foods that improve the body's ability to support the effect of insulin, functionally reducing "insulin resistance." With the guidance of your healthcare provider, this can be an easy process that results in a healthy and delicious dietary plan.

Nutritional supplementation may also offer great benefit. Your healthcare provider may recommend that you supplement your diet with a combination of macro-nutrients that include soy protein, special fibers and a low glycemic index starch known as high-amylose starch. These help support healthy carbohydrate absorption and blood sugar metabolism.

Supplementing your diet with various fatty acids and micro-nutrients may also be very helpful. These include the essential fatty acids eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) to support healthy cell membranes; conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) to support the insulin signal and promote adequate gene expression for improved utilization of sugar by the mitochondrion; lipoic acid to further support the insulin signal and sugar utilization by the mitochondrion; the minerals vanadium, chromium and magnesium to provide additional support to the insulin signal; vitamin E and inositol for further insulin signal support; and biotin to support sugar utilization by the mitochondria. Other herbs and accessory nutrients may also be helpful.

Take the first step to achieving healthy blood sugar metabolism and sustained good health right now! Ask your healthcare provider for the program that is right for you.