5 Odd Superfoods That Beat Diabetes

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Diabetes is a disease in which blood sugar levels remain constantly high. Chronically high blood sugar levels can cause damage throughout the body. In fact, diabetes puts you at an increased risk for developing heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, nerve damage, and blindness.

For this reason it is important that diabetics and pre-diabetics take steps to manage their blood sugar levels. Medication is the route most doctors recommend, however, there are natural things you can do to control diabetes or even prevent it from happening at all. Eating a healthy low sugar diet, especially when coupled with exercise, has been shown to drastically improve blood sugar levels.

However, if you really want to get an edge on your diabetes or, you simply want to control your blood sugar so you never get it, there are six somewhat odd superfoods you should incorporate into your diet today. These six superfoods have been scientifically proven to either improve insulin sensitivity, slow the release of glucose into the blood, or by nature, they do not cause blood sugar or insulin levels to spike after eaten.

While these six foods are natural, check with your doctor before you begin taking any type of dietary supplement.
Cinnamon has been used in Asian cultures for thousands of years to cure ailments like headaches, loss of appetite, dyspepsia, the common cold, inflammation, wounds, nausea, and diarrhea. Interestingly, there is evidence that the Chinese used cinnamon to treat “thirsty disease.” This term was used to describe diabetes due to the increased thirst it causes.

Recently, researchers have been investigating cinnamon’s effect on blood sugar. They have found that it is actually quite affective at blood sugar control. For example, studies have found that half a teaspoon of cinnamon taken daily for a 40-90 day period significantly reduced blood sugar levels. In addition to reducing blood sugar, researchers also found cinnamon consumption caused a reduction in triglycerides and LDL (bad) cholesterol. These are important findings since individuals with diabetes are at an increased risk for heart disease and stroke.

The researchers concluded that cinnamon seems to have an “insulin-like effect” in the body. This is extremely important since insulin is the hormone responsible for removing excess sugar from the blood. Even better, cinnamon also appears to improve the effectiveness, or sensitivity, of insulin too. This is another amazing benefit since the cells in diabetics and pre-diabetics become “desensitized” to insulin, so basically, cinnamon helps cells to become more sensitive allowing insulin to do its important job once again.

Another interesting fact is that cinnamon contains certain antioxidants that have a positive effect on blood glucose levels. A study published in 2009, found that the polyphenols in cinnamon appear to help with the sensitivity of insulin while also neutralizing free radicals in the body.

To increase your cinnamon intake sprinkle it on your food generously throughout the day. Aim to get in at least half a teaspoon per day by sprinkling it on yogurt, smoothies, or sweet potatoes. Remember, cinnamon doesn’t just have to be used in sweet foods. There are quite a few savory dishes that call for cinnamon as well.
Apple cider vinegar has been used for centuries to treat infections, coughs, insect bites, warts, ear infections, and wounds. However, recently the effect of ACV on blood sugar levels has been increasing in interest.

To date there have been numerous studies showing that as little as one dose of ACV (about 2 tablespoons of ACV mixed in water) taken prior to a starchy meal reduces blood sugar levels after the meal is eaten in type II diabetics. This is an incredible finding since starchy meals typically spike blood glucose in diabetics and non-diabetics alike. Another positive benefit the study discovered is the individuals who consumed the ACV before their meal ended up eating less the rest of the day. This suggests that ACV helps with satiety and therefore weight loss. This is a win/win for diabetics and pre-diabetics since obesity is a major risk factor of diabetes.

One study even suggests that the mechanisms with which ACV works to improve blood sugar levels is similar to the popular diabetes drug acarbose or metformin. This is incredible because it suggests that diabetics on metformin could potentially reduce their need for the medication simply by taking ACV before meals.

If you would like to start incorporating ACV into your diet you should drink a mix of 1-2 tablespoons of ACV mixed in 8oz of water immediately before starchy or sugary meals. According to the studies the blood sugar lowering effect was most pronounced when ACV was taken minutes before a meal rather than hours before.
Resistant Starch
(Potato Starch)

When it comes to blood sugar control the term “starch” isn’t generally on the recommended foods list. Resistant starch (RS) is called resistant because, much like soluble fiber, it is resistant to digestion, meaning it is not broken down into glucose like other starches are. Many studies have shown that it can have powerful health benefits for diabetics and pre-diabetics.

As I mentioned above, RS is not broken down in the body it is actually broken down by the good bacteria in the gut. Your gut flora breaks it down into short-chain fatty acids, which are absorbed into the body. This means that RS doesn’t act like a typical carbohydrate in the body and, therefore, doesn’t spike blood sugar levels like a typical carbohydrate. Studies show when 30 g/d of RS is incorporated into meals it not only keeps blood sugar from spiking it also increases insulin sensitivity in the muscle cells.5

There are a few ways you can begin adding RS into your diet. A few foods that are high in RS are very green unripe bananas, seeds, and legumes. Potatoes and corn are also good sources of RS, however, they must be prepared correctly and not eaten hot in order to reap the benefits (heat changes the structure of RS causing it to spike blood sugar).

All of the studies reviewed for this report, however, used powdered RS extracted from food rather than whole foods. Powdered RS can be added to any food (as long as it is room temp or colder) like yogurt, smoothies, and tuna salad. If you can add it to a meal that is already high in soluble fiber you will get an added benefit. One study found blood sugar control was enhanced when RS was combined with soluble fiber.5
Lentils, a type of bean that grows inside a pod, are very common in traditional Indian and Latin American dishes. Recent research suggests legumes can improve the health of diabetics.

A study, published in the Archives of Internal Medicine, tested this hypothesis. In the study half of a group of type II diabetics were told to add a cup of legumes per day to their diet while the other half was told to add the equivalent of whole wheat. After three months, both the legume-eaters and the whole-wheat-eaters saw a reduction in their A1c values (a marker of average blood sugar) but the reduction was higher in the legume group. The legume-eaters also lost a bit more weight than the whole wheat group and also had more of a drop in cholesterol and blood pressure. For these reasons the researchers concluded that adding in legumes relieves diabetic symptoms and may allow for lower doses of medication to control blood sugar levels.

One reason legumes are so beneficial for diabetics and pre-diabetics is because they have a low glycemic index. The glycemic index scale measures how quickly a food causes blood sugar to rise after it is eaten. Low glycemic foods have been shown to improved blood-sugar control in patients with Type 2 diabetes. The reason lentils have a low glycemic index is because they are high in protein and fiber making them an ideal slow-burning food.

Since lentils are very versatile and do not have a strong taste they can easily be incorporated into your favorite dishes. For example you can add them into meatloaf, burgers, and muffins before cooking. Lentils also go well in stew, soup, and chili or you can toss them on top of salad for added protein.
Xylitol and erythritol are both sugar substitutes. Since they have a sweet taste but do not cause blood sugar to spike they are a great option for anyone concerned with controlling their blood sugar, like diabetics and pre-diabetics.  

Erythritol is about 70% as sweet as sugar while Xylitol has about the same sweetness level as real sugar only at a fraction of the calories. Both xylitol and erythritol are low-glycemic with xylitol at a seven on the scale and erythritol at a zero. Although both contain 4g of carbohydrate per teaspoon their amount of net carbs (the carbs that affect blood sugar) is zero. Xylitol only contains ten calories per teaspoon but erythritol contains zero calories so if you are looking for a calorie free sweetener, erythritol is for you. However, since both are metabolized slowly and, therefore, they do not spike blood sugar or insulin secretion either one is a great choice for diabetics. 

Adding these two sugar substitutes into your diet is pretty easy since they can be used to replace sugar in any recipe. An added benefit is neither one breaks down with heat so they are both safe to use in baking. Since xylitol’s sweetness is nearly the same as regular sugar it can be used in place of sugar at a 1:1 ratio. Erythritol, on the other hand, is only 70% as sweet as sugar, so for every 2/3 cup of sugar you’ll need a full cup of erythritol.
Conclusion

Diabetes is a disease that can cause serious health issues like heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, nerve damage, and blindness. While allopathic doctors tend to prefer controlling diabetes with medication, the truth is there are many natural things you can do to control blood sugar levels. Changes in nutrition and increased exercise are two non-pharmaceutical techniques you can use to control your blood sugar levels. However, if you want to increase your chances of getting off medication or you want to keep pre-diabetes from turning into full blown diabetes, you should start incorporating the six superfoods detailed in this report today. These foods have been scientifically proven to alleviate diabetic symptoms while also reducing the risk of developing diabetes. The fact is these six foods are something everyone should incorporate into their diet if their health and wellness is important to them.

References

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