



Health Connection

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Can a Lack of Gluten Raise Your Diabetes Risk?

Got gluten? You should. A new study suggests that going “gluten-free” may actually raise your risk for type 2 diabetes. The diet, meant for a small population of individuals who have Celiac disease or a gluten intolerance, became popular despite lack of evidence that it was healthful for most people. Gluten is a protein found in wheat, rye and barley that gives baked goods their texture. A small percentage of people with celiac disease may also need to avoid oats due to a protein sensitivity.

According to Dr. Geng Zong from the Harvard University Department of Nutrition T.H. Chan School of Public Health, gluten-free foods are often less nutritious because they lack dietary fiber as well as vitamins and minerals. They also tend to be more expensive. His study looked at the health effects of a gluten-free diet on subjects that did not medically need to follow one. In a long-term longitudinal study, scientists observed that most subjects consumed 12 grams of gluten or less per day. In those that consumed higher amounts of gluten, the risk of type 2 diabetes over a 30-year span was lower. Cereal fiber intake was lower in subjects on a gluten-free diet, which is important to note as it is a protective component for the development of type 2 diabetes. After accounting for the effect of cereal fiber, those in the highest 20% of gluten ingestion experienced a 13% lower risk of diabetes development than those with the lowest intake of gluten (< 4 grams).



In three other large, long-term Nurse's Health studies (NHS and NHS II) and the Health Professionals Follow-Up study, gluten intake was gathered using food frequency questionnaires. The average gluten intake was between 5.8 to 7.1 grams per day, which came primarily from pretzels, bread, pizza, muffins, cereal, and pasta. Data was observational as subjects self-reported their gluten intake. In over 4.24 million person years of follow up over 1984-1990 and 2010-2013, 15,947 cases of type 2 diabetes were identified. Gluten-free diets were not popular at the time, so information on gluten abstainers was not available.

The bottom line is that if you don't need a gluten-free diet, don't follow it. Include gluten-containing, high-fiber whole grains in your diet daily. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans advise 20-25 grams of dietary fiber per day for women and 35-38 grams per day for men. Below is a list of whole grains and their fiber content:

- Bran cereal (3/4 cup): 5.9 grams
- Brown rice (1/2 cup cooked): 2 grams
- Oatmeal (1/2 cup cooked): 4.1 grams
- Quinoa (1/2 cup cooked): 2.75 grams
- Whole wheat bread (1 slice): 3 grams
- Whole grain pasta (1/2 cup cooked): 5-6 grams

By Lisa C. Andrews, MEd, RD, LD

Take Control of Your Blood Pressure

If your goal is to lower your blood pressure and enjoy a healthful eating plan, then the DASH diet may be perfect for you. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) trial is one of the recommended eating plans in the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines. The DASH diet lowers blood pressure by including higher amounts of potassium, magnesium and calcium, even without reducing sodium. So, what's in the DASH eating plan?



- **6-8 daily servings of grains**, with at least three of those servings as whole grains. One serving is equal to 1 ounce of bread, ½ cup of cooked rice/pasta, ½ cup of cooked cereal, or 1 cup of dry cereals.
- **4-6 daily servings of fruit**. Emphasize fresh fruit or unsweetened canned or frozen fruit. One serving is equal to ½ cup of cut-up, canned, or frozen fruit or 1 small piece of fresh fruit.
- **4-6 daily servings of vegetables**, including raw or cooked vegetables. One serving is equal to 1 cup of raw leafy green vegetables or 1/2 cup of chopped vegetables. Vegetables are good sources of fiber, potassium, and magnesium and are naturally low in sodium.
- **2-3 daily cups of non-fat or low-fat dairy foods** like milk, cheese, or yogurt for protein, calcium, potassium, and Vitamin D. One serving is equal to 1 cup of milk or yogurt or 1 and ½ ounces of cheese.
- **6 ounces of lean protein** each day like chicken, fish, and lean red meat, which are sources of protein, B vitamins, iron, & zinc.
- **3-6 weekly servings of nuts, seeds, and legumes** for fiber, protein, magnesium, and potassium. One serving of nuts and seeds is equal to 1 ounce. One serving of legumes is ½ cup.
- **2-4 servings of fats and sweets**.

By Lynn Grieger, RDN, CDE, CPT, CHWC

Say Yes to Cardiac Rehab

When you suffer a heart attack or undergo heart surgery, cardiac rehabilitation gives you the tools to face — and fight — your heart condition.

What is Cardiac Rehab? Cardiac rehab is a medically-supervised program that includes safe and monitored exercise, education on topics like heart-healthy eating, and counseling to reduce stress.

Who Needs It? Cardiac rehab is for anyone who has had a heart attack or other cardiovascular event, like bypass surgery or angioplasty. It is appropriate for all ages. Whether you're 43 or 83, an individualized program will get you on the road to recovery.

What are the Benefits of Cardiac Rehab? Cardiac rehab reduces the risk of death and future cardiac events, cuts down on hospitalizations, and improves quality of life. Participants often see improved lipids, blood pressure, and weight loss. They also increase their knowledge about heart disease and how to manage it. Cardiac rehab even helps with getting back to work and normal daily activities too.

Despite the many benefits of cardiac rehab, less than 20% of those eligible actually participate. Those least likely to enroll in cardiac rehab include women and minorities, and barriers include cost, time, and transportation.

Women and minorities are less likely to participate in cardiac rehab. They are also more likely to die within five years of their first heart attack, compared to white males. Cardiac rehab could make a big difference with this population!

What Can You Do? If you or a loved one has a heart attack or coronary event, ask about cardiac rehab. If your physician refers you to a cardiac rehab program, follow up. Even if you can't do the entire program, a few visits are better than none. Do whatever you can to get yourself or your loved one to cardiac rehab!

By Hollis Bass, MEd, RD, LD



Aging Well: Spotlight on Added Sugars

How much added sugar do you consume? The typical American consumes enough added sugars to contribute to health problems, including fatty liver, insulin resistance, cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes. Added sugars also provide calories without any nutritional benefit. These empty-calorie foods can contribute to overweight and obesity. Often people think that if they're not overweight, they can consume as much sugar as they want. However, consuming too much added sugar leads to health problems, even in people at a healthy weight.



There's an important difference between sugar that occurs naturally in fruit, plain milk, and unsweetened yogurt, and added sugars. Naturally-occurring sugar does not act the same way in our body as added sugars and it does not cause health problems.

The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugars to no more than 100 calories per day (about 6 teaspoons) for women, and no more than 150 calories per day (about 9 teaspoons) for men. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans and MyPlate recommend that no more than 10% of daily calories come from added sugars, which is roughly 200 calories per day.

This may sound like a lot until you start reading food labels:

- 12 ounces of a carbonated beverage like Coke, Pepsi, Sprite or root beer contains 126 calories – all from added sugars.
- 8 ounces of a fruit beverage or fruit drink contains 48 calories from added sugars.
- A typical glazed donut contains 32 calories from added sugars.
- One slice of apple pie contains 61 calories from added sugars.
- 6 ounces of flavored yogurt contains 78 calories from added sugars.

By Lynn Grieger RDN, CDE, CPT, CWC