

5 surprising ways to get your blood sugar in line

When it comes to keeping glucose levels steady, there's a lot you can do to ensure your diabetes management plan stays on track, and it often starts with small changes in your lifestyle, says Susan Dopart, MS, RD, CDE, author of *101 Ways to Control your Diabetes*. She shares her top 'aha' ways to put you—and not your diabetes—in the driver's seat. Ask your healthcare team if they make sense for you. —BY KAREN KLEIMANN



1. Skip the cereal at breakfast.

"Eating cereal is like having a candy bar for breakfast," Dopart says. The reason?

Cereal contains anywhere from 30-80 grams of carbs per serving, or two to five slices worth of bread. Such a heavy carb load can quickly spike blood sugar levels.



2. Drink tea with your meals.

Tea lovers rejoice! The brew is packed with significant benefits: "The polyphenols or antioxidants in tea (green, black or oolong) can lower post-meal blood glucose and fend off hyperglycemia," Dopart explains. Research shows these antioxidants help cells become more insulin sensitive so

Try this instead! Whip up a few eggs with your choice of avocado or tomato slices; or go with cottage cheese or plain Greek yogurt with ½ cup berries, some nuts or ground flaxseed topped with cinnamon for a well-balanced, high-protein breakfast.

sugar can be better processed. Which tea is best? Green tea has the highest levels of polyphenols and a bonus antioxidant called EGCG, which has been linked with a lower risk of heart disease and cancer. Whichever your brew of choice, skip milk and sweeteners (real and artificial) to get the maximum benefit.



3. Resist weekend carb splurges.

Dopart says weekend relaxation and enjoyment can be many people's weak time for overdoing the carbs, noting that a breakfast of sweetened coffee and a bagel can contain as many as 150 grams of carbs, and overburdening the pancreas. But there's no need to feel deprived! Instead, eat carbs in very small amounts throughout the day.

"It's a win-win! Limiting your carbs helps the liver and pancreas in regulating glucose and insulin levels, and thus controls both blood sugar and weight!" she says.

Sugar craving? Instead of reaching for a high-carb snack, spread natural peanut butter on one to two squares of 75% dark chocolate for a homemade—and healthier—peanut butter cup.



4. Take a happiness break each day.

"Happiness produces endorphins, which can lower stress in the body, leading to lower blood glucose levels," says Dopart. So read a book, take a walk or watch a funny video.

Stressed out? Dopart says even in anxiety-prone situations, you can lift your spirits by forcing a smile. Studies show even faking a grin can produce stress-lowering


hormones. Or try mindfulness meditation, a practice that clears the mind and helps you stay in the moment (see mindful.org). In fact, a recent study in the *Journal of Diabetes Research* found that adults with type 2 diabetes who did a mindfulness meditation course reported improved emotional well-being, less anxiety and significantly reduced their fasting blood glucose levels and A1C levels.



5. Reset your metabolism.

Dopart recommends going 12 hours without food by nixing the late dinners and snacks, which are associated with poor blood sugar control in type 2 diabetes. "The fast can make your cells more sensitive to insulin and metabolize glucose more effectively, which allows your system to

reset for another day," she says. Get your healthcare provider's okay before starting.

Late-night kitchen dweller? Try scheduling dinner earlier in the evening and eating diabetes-friendly snacks that are high in protein throughout the day. And because research shows that tiredness from lack of sleep can be confused for hunger, aim for seven to nine hours of sleep each night. 

Need to drop excess pounds?
Ask your healthcare provider about diabetes treatments that can help.