

# BETTER HEALTH 4 YOU

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## DIABETES

### Diabetic Diet: 6 Foods That May Help Control Blood Sugar

Coffee and cinnamon have made headlines recently as foods that might be able to cut the risk of diabetes or help to improve blood sugar levels. But don't get the idea that such foods are magic bullets for your diabetic diet, experts warn.

"None of this is a magic potion for diabetes," says American Dietetic Association spokeswoman Cathy Nonas, RD. It's still important for people with diabetes to eat a balanced

**While there's no substitute for a balanced diabetic diet, adding certain foods may help those with diabetes keep sugar levels in check.**

diabetic diet and exercise to help manage the disease, she says.

Nevertheless, some foods, such as white bread, are converted almost right away to blood sugar, causing a quick spike. Other foods, such as brown rice, are digested more slowly, causing a lower and gentler change in blood sugar.

If you are trying to follow a healthy diabetic diet, here are six that may help to keep your blood sugar in check.

#### Oatmeal

Oatmeal can help control blood sugar -- but don't get the sweetened kind.

"Even though it's a carbohydrate, it's a very good carbohydrate," American Dietetic Association spokeswoman Marisa Moore, RD, LD, tells WebMD. Because it's high in soluble fiber, "it's slower to digest and it won't raise your blood sugar as much or as quickly. It's going to work better at controlling blood sugar over time."

Not only does this high-quality

carbohydrate offer a steadier source of energy than white bread, it can also help with weight loss. The soluble fiber in oats "helps to keep us feeling fuller longer," Moore says.

That's important for people with type 2 diabetes, who tend to be overweight. "If you reduce the weight, you usually significantly improve the glucose control," Nonas says.

Barley isn't as popular as oats, but there's some evidence that barley, which is also high in soluble fiber, may also help with blood glucose control. Besides oats and barley, Moore adds, "most whole grains are going to be

## IT'S APPLE SEASON!

### Baked Apple

Servings: 2

1 medium apple, peeled, cored and sliced into 4 pieces

2 tsp. Light Sugar & Stevia Blend

½ tsp. flour

¼ tsp. cinnamon

2 tsp. walnuts

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease small baking dish; set aside
2. Place apple pieces into dish. Combine sugar, flour, cinnamon and walnuts. Spoon over apple slices. Bake turning over after 20 minutes. Continue to bake until tender. Serve warm!

Calories 70 Carbohydrate 15 g  
Protein 0 g Fat 1.5 g Saturated  
Fat 0 g Sugar 12 g Dietary  
Fiber 1 g Cholesterol 0 mg  
Sodium 0 mg Potassium 90 mg



a great choice for a person with diabetes."

### Broccoli, Spinach, and Green Beans

Add plenty of nonstarchy vegetables, such as broccoli, spinach, and green beans, to your diabetic diet, diabetes experts say. These foods are high in fiber and low in carbohydrates, which make them ideal for people with diabetes.

In contrast, starchy vegetables include peas, potatoes, corn, winter squash, and lima beans. There's no need to cut them from the diet, Moore says. "They do give us additional nutrients. We want to maintain balance." But because starchy vegetables have more carbohydrates and raise blood sugar more, it's important to stick to proper portion sizes, she says.

There's new evidence, too, that vegetables are healthy for people with diabetes. Researchers have found that a low-fat vegan diet may help type 2 diabetes patients to better manage their disease. In a study published in *Diabetes Care*, 43% of people with type 2 diabetes who followed a low-fat vegan diet for 22 weeks reduced the need to take diabetes medications. That's compared to only 26% who adhered to the diet recommended by the American Diabetes Association.

On average, the vegan group also lost more weight and lowered levels of bad cholesterol. Because people with diabetes are more prone to heart disease, eating with heart health in mind matters as much as blood sugar control, Moore says.

### Strawberries

Some diabetes patients shy away from strawberries because of their sweetness, says Moore. But a cup of strawberries makes for a healthy snack that won't raise blood sugar too much. They're a much better option than a cookie or candy bar.

"They're pretty low in calories and carbohydrates," she says. What's more, strawberries are high in fiber and water, so people will feel fuller longer. The longer that people with diabetes can stay full, the fewer carbohydrates they'll consume overall, she says.

### Salmon and Lean Meats

Meats, which are high in protein, don't affect blood sugar as much as carbohydrates, Nonas says. When eaten in proper portions, fish, skinless chicken breast, and lean cuts of meat are good choices for diabetic diets.

Moore says salmon is an especially smart option because it also contains heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids. And 65% of people with diabetes die from either heart attack or stroke," she says.

Meat is also a source of chromium, a mineral that enables insulin to function properly and helps the body to metabolize carbohydrates.

### Sparkling Water

Trying to break a sugary soda habit? Or just tired of guzzling diet sodas day after day?

Go for sugar-free sparkling waters, Moore says. The carbonated beverages come in various flavors, including tangerine, grapefruit, and apple-

pear. "They take away the desire for something bubbly," she says.

Many sparkling waters have no carbohydrates or calories -- a boon not just for blood sugar levels, but weight control, too.

### Cinnamon

Cinnamon has been in the news lately as a spice that may have insulin-like effects and help reduce blood sugar levels in people with diabetes.

In a recent German study, researchers randomly assigned 79 patients who had type 2 diabetes into two groups. For four months, the test group took a cinnamon extract three times a day, while the control group took a placebo. At the end, those on the cinnamon extract had lowered their fasting blood sugar levels by 10.3%, compared to 3.4% for the control group. The scientists concluded that the cinnamon extract seemed to have a moderate effect in reducing blood sugar levels in diabetes patients, especially among those who had more trouble controlling blood sugar.

Before doctors can start recommending cinnamon for diabetes, more studies need to be done. But Moore says it certainly can't hurt to sprinkle the aromatic spice regularly onto your morning oatmeal.

