



NUTRITION CONSULTING INC.

## Top 3 Myths About Sugar, Carbs, Sweeteners, and Diabetes

### Choosing a Healthy Diet for Diabetes

By Andrea Holwegner BSc, RD

If you have diabetes, or have a friend or family member with diabetes, you know that managing a healthy diet is key. You may hear many conflicting messages about the safety of alternative sweeteners and how much sugar and carbohydrates are OK to consume if you have diabetes. Here are three common myths about diabetes and some clarification about eating for diabetes:

#### Myth 1: I only need to pay attention to the sugar on the label

The number one most important thing for someone with diabetes to examine on a label is the total grams of carbohydrates. This is because most carbohydrates (except fibre) are sugar to your body and directly influence blood sugars.

The type of sugar in grains, pasta, rice, bread, legumes, and starchy veggies are complex carbohydrates (contain longer chains of sugar similar to a pearl necklace with each pearl representing a sugar). Foods such as fruit, milk, yogurt, some vegetables, beer, table sugar, and sweets have simple carbohydrates (single or double units of sugar).

There are other important numbers to look at on a label if you have diabetes: If you are overweight, then watching your calories is important. Since individuals with diabetes are also at risk for heart disease, reducing trans fats, saturated fats and sodium is significant. Choosing higher fiber foods, as well as meals and snacks that contain protein, is also helpful to help improve blood sugar control.

#### Myth 2: I should avoid white foods and carbs in general

There is no reason to avoid carbohydrates if you have diabetes. Carbohydrates are essential for brain and nervous system functioning and for your muscles as energy. Without adequate carbs, you will feel tired, have difficulty concentrating, and negative changes in mood. Natural foods such as fruits, veggies, grains, milk, and yogurt supply important nutrients and phytonutrients.

Since carbohydrates are found abundantly in



It's your **health.**



**Take a stand.**

**NUTRITION COACHING | SEMINARS | CONSULTING**

PHONE: (403) 262-3466 [www.healthstandnutrition.com](http://www.healthstandnutrition.com)



NUTRITION CONSULTING INC.

starchy foods, juice, savory snacks, and sweets (and can be over-consumed), watch how much of these you have at a single occasion. While everyone's needs are different, a good place to start is to have a maximum of two pieces of bread, or alternatively, one cup of grains, potatoes, corn, and fruit per meal or snack. This means a common supper meal that contains a bun, as well as a baked potato, or alternatively a meal that has 2 slices of garlic toast, along with a full cup of pasta, may be too much if you have diabetes.

For better blood sugar control, it is better to have smaller meals and add snacks than large meals. The best way to assess how your body responds to the common foods you are eating is to purchase and use a blood sugar monitor regularly.

Also, be aware that all carbs are not created equal. Some carbohydrates have a high glycemic index, which means they can spike your blood sugars rapidly. Choose starchy foods with a lower glycemic response such as most beans/legumes; basmati rice instead of short grain rice; yams more often than white potatoes; whole grain breads instead of white breads; and high fibre bran cereals more often than low fibre cereals.

### **Myth 3: I must avoid dessert or use alternative sweeteners**

While moderate consumption of alternative sweeteners, such as aspartame (such as Equal or Nutrasweet), or sucralose (such as Splenda), are considered safe by Health Canada and the Canadian Diabetes Association, just because you have diabetes doesn't mean you must consume these. For more information visit: <http://www.diabetes.ca/diabetes-and-you/healthy-living-resources/diet-nutrition/sugar-sweeteners>. As an advocate for real food, AND a foodie that simply does not like the taste of alternative sweeteners, I prefer to simply use less of the real thing.

Small amounts of regular sugar and dessert can be included, but you do need to be savvy about how much and also what else you are eating with them. If you are going to have a sweet dessert, look for recipes that use less sugar and icings in general. Also, eat your dessert separate from a meal so you can spread out how much carbohydrates you are having at one time. Lastly, head out for a walk or any type of physical activity, since this is one of the single most effective ways to lower your blood sugars.

---

*Andrea Holwegner, known as the Chocoholic Dietitian, is founder and president of Health Stand Nutrition Consulting Inc., a member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers and a media expert for the Dietitians of Canada. For nutrition counselling information and to sign up for a free monthly newsletter loaded with nutrition tips, recipes and more visit [www.healthstandnutrition.com](http://www.healthstandnutrition.com). Twitter @chocoholicRD.*

**It's your health.**



**Take a stand.**

**NUTRITION COACHING | SEMINARS | CONSULTING**

PHONE: (403) 262-3466 [www.healthstandnutrition.com](http://www.healthstandnutrition.com)