

## Balancing Blood Sugars: Weight Loss and Diabetes Prevention

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### Why it is important to balance blood sugar levels?

There is a delicate range of blood sugar concentration that must be maintained. Anything that falls below the range can lead to hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and blood levels above the range can lead to hyperglycemia (high blood sugar).

Hypoglycemia is a dangerous condition because a deficiency of glucose (a sugar), which is the fuel for the body and brain, can lead to brain damage or even death if it is for a long period of time. When glucose levels drop below normal, the following symptoms can occur: sweating, tremors, anxiety, hunger, dizziness, headache, blurred vision, confusion, abnormal behaviour, loss of consciousness and convulsions

Hyperglycemia occurs when blood glucose is above normal levels. If it is not treated in a timely manner, it can lead to diabetic ketoacidosis and coma. Symptoms include increased urination, increased thirst and increased hunger.

### What factors influence blood sugar levels?

Insulin, an important blood sugar regulating hormone, is normally released when blood glucose levels elevate. It sends a message to the cells in the body to take up and store the glucose from the blood.

Regular exercise, maintaining a healthy weight and diet will all help to regulate blood glucose levels.

### What are some dietary guidelines to balance blood sugar levels?

A general rule to maintain balanced blood sugar levels is to select foods that release glucose SLOWLY. First, avoid all highly processed, high sugar and starchy foods (the “quick releasers”: white sugar, white flour, white rice, potatoes). Stick to whole foods, including grains, dark/colourful vegetables, lean proteins, nuts, seeds and fruit (such as cherries, grapefruit, peach, apple, pear, plums, orange, grapes, kiwi, banana).

### What happens if blood sugar levels are not kept balanced?

If blood sugar levels are not kept balanced over a long period, it can throw off your body’s response to insulin. Consequently, the levels of glucose in the blood will remain high even when insulin is released (the body essentially becomes “resistant” to insulin). When this situation occurs, diabetes is the likely outcome – this has unfortunately become very common in North American society as a result of our diet and lifestyle.

A diagnosis of diabetes means that you have to rely on medication and closely monitor your food and lifestyle. Complications of diabetes are numerous and can be very serious; they include depression, nerve damage, heart disease & stroke, skin disorders, blindness, amputation, kidney failure and death.