

Healthy food choices for pregnant women who are managing their diabetes with dietary adjustments and oral medications

Making healthy food choices can do a lot for your blood sugar levels. We have collected the most important things you need to know here. For more information, talk to your dietician.

The food we eat is a mix of fat, protein and carbohydrates. All of these substances are important for the body, but it is mainly carbohydrates that raise blood sugar. As carbohydrates are the main source of nutrition for a growing fetus, pregnant women are recommended to eat at least 150 - 175 grams of carbohydrates/day.

That's why completely excluding carbohydrates is not a good way to get good blood sugar levels!

However, the distribution of carbohydrates in different meals throughout the day is important for you. You need a certain amount of carbohydrates in each meal that works for you, and you can also choose slow carbohydrates. It's important that you feel satisfied after eating, that you gain enough weight and get all the nutrients you need.

Slow carbohydrates

Can be found in: Legumes (lentils, beans and peas) whole grain breads, rice, pasta, quinoa and bulgur.

Things that can raise blood sugar

The speed at which food passes through your stomach determines how quickly your blood sugar will rise. A slowly rising blood sugar at mealtime is better for you.

Things that cause the stomach to empty more slowly

- **Consistency** – The more the stomach has to work to break down food, the slower the rise in blood sugar. For example, raw vegetables/root vegetables that need to be chewed thoroughly, and coarse bread.
- **Fat** – Such as: avocado, oil, Turkish/Greek yogurt
- **Protein** – Such as: meat, fish, seafood, eggs, quark/cottage cheese, other cheeses and legumes.
- **Acidity** – Such as: vinegar dressings, sourdough and pickled vegetables.



Good meal planning

By spreading out your meals throughout the day, you can avoid getting too hungry at mealtimes. This will make it easier to eat smaller meals and avoid high blood sugar levels.

3 small main meals and 2-3 snack breaks are usually a good distribution.

Sometimes a piece of fruit can be enough as a snack. But if your blood sugar rises too much, you need a combination of carbohydrates and proteins/fat, such as cottage cheese/quark with fruit/berries or 1 whole wheat sandwich. Flavored quark without added sugar works too.

Snacks that make you full but don't affect blood sugar are vegetables, nuts/almonds, a few cold meatballs, cheese, eggs, olives, avocado.

Beverages

Water or sparkling water is the best mealtime drink. You can also use drinks that only contain sweeteners, such as light sugar drinks and diet sodas. Keep in mind that all juices contain fruit sugar and cause a rapid rise in blood sugar. This is true even if you press the juice yourself or if a product is labeled "unsweetened" or with "no sugar added".

Fruits and berries

Fruits/berries are healthy in many ways, but they always raise blood sugar. 1-3 fruits per day is usually fine, but only eat one at a time. One fruit equals about 200 milliliters of berries. A good rule of thumb is that 1 fruit is equivalent to what fits in the palm of your hand. You can slow down the rapid rise in blood sugar by adding something that slows it down, such as nuts,

cottage cheese or quark.

Sugar and sweeteners

You don't need to exclude all sugars completely. Small amounts of sugar as part of an ingredient in a food product rarely cause high blood sugars. Sweeteners are fine to use, but there are some sweeteners that can raise blood sugar in large enough quantities.

Honey, agave syrup, fruit sugar and similar products affect blood sugar in the same way as regular sugar.

Milk products

Milk causes a rapid rise in blood sugar, which makes it a bit difficult. You may also need to limit fil/sour milk and yogurt, even if you choose the natural varieties. Try to see what works for you! Quark and cottage cheese are higher in protein and make your blood sugar rise slower. It could be a good alternative to milk and yoghurt. Watch out for sweetened varieties. They are fine to use if they are sweetened with sweeteners.

Cheese does not affect blood sugar at all. Eat cheese to get calcium, which is important if you are pregnant. Low-fat cheese (17%) contains more calcium than fat cheese (28%). Keep in mind that dairy products also inhibit iron absorption, so it's a good idea to avoid them at lunch and dinner and eat them for breakfast and between meals instead. If you are taking iron tablets, do not take them together with dairy products.

Bread and cereals

A good bread should contain sourdough, whole grains, whole seeds and barley. It's not enough that the bread is just high in fiber. The bread doesn't have to be completely sugar-free. A maximum of 5-6g of sugar per 100g of bread is a good rule of thumb.

Crispbread, porridge, gruel, and cereals cause a rapid rise in blood sugar due to their consistency, even if you choose fiber-rich varieties. Fiber is good for keeping your stomach going and whole grains are nutritious but don't always improve your blood sugar.

Keep in mind that an unexpected blood sugar result is not always caused by food. There are many other things that can affect your blood sugar.