

Healthy Living

Food choices that can increase type 2 diabetes risk

A healthy diet has been linked to a host of benefits that affect people every day. When people eat healthy, they can lower their risk for disease, maintain a healthy weight and benefit from improved energy levels that can help them get the recommended amounts of physical activity each day.

As beneficial as a healthy diet can be, a poor diet can have just as big an impact in the opposite direction. Poor diet is linked to a host of negative outcomes, including a greater risk for conditions like overweight and obesity that increase the chances a person develops type 2 diabetes. People concerned by the effects their dietary decisions may have on their risk for diabetes can take note of various items that can make a type 2 diabetes diagnosis more likely.

Sugary drinks

The United Kingdom-based Dia-

betes UK notes that sugary drinks, which include beverages like soft drinks and sweetened tea, can increase a person's risk for type 2 diabetes. In fact, a 2019 study from researchers at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health found that increasing intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and 100 percent fruit juices by more than four ounces per day over a four-year period was associated with a 16 percent higher risk of diabetes. Studies have found that sugary drinks can quickly increase blood sugar levels, a spike that can lead to insulin resistance and the accumulation of fat in the liver, both of which are risk factors for type 2 diabetes.

Sweets

"Sweets" is a broad and not easily defined term, but those concerned about food choices and diabetes should know that this category

generally refers to candy, deep-fried desserts, cookies, and various baked goods. These foods tend to be high in sugar, and sugar consumption leads to the production of insulin. While that's not necessarily bad, University Hospitals notes that if the pancreas is continually producing insulin, the body may eventually become insulin-resistant.

Insulin resistance can interrupt normal body system responses and contribute to nerve damage. Excess sugar not used as energy also is stored as fat, which can lead to weight gain, a known risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

Refined carbohydrates

Diabetes UK notes that refined carbohydrates

like white bread, white rice and sugar-heavy breakfast cereals also can elevate a person's risk for type 2 diabetes. These foods are digested rapidly, which can cause blood sugar levels to rise as the pancreas secretes insulin more quickly. When choosing carbs, individuals are urged to pick whole grains and fruits and vegeta-

bles, which take longer to digest and retain fiber and nutrients that are lost during the processing necessary to produce refined carbohydrates.

Diet can be a useful tool in the fight against type 2 diabetes when individuals make healthy choices regarding the foods and beverages they consume.

Summertime hydration strategies

Summer is a season to spend outdoors soaking up some sun. But all that time outdoors can pose some health risks if people are not careful. The dangers of overexposure to the sun are well-documented. Sunburn is one such threat that can not only lead to discomfort, but also increase a person's risk for skin cancer. But sunburn is easily prevented with the use of sunscreen, and that's not the only summertime threat that's easily avoided.

Dehydration occurs when the body loses more fluids than it takes in. Come the dog days

of summer, it's easy to lose fluids when spending time outdoors. Sweating is one way to lose fluid on a hot day, but there are myriad ways to avoid dehydration once the hot weather kicks in.

• Don't wait until you're thirsty to drink water. According to NHS Inform, the national health information service of Scotland, thirst is typically the brain's way of warning individuals that they are dehydrated. So it's unwise to wait until you're thirsty to drink water. A proactive approach can help to prevent dehydration, espe-

cially when spending time outdoors on hot days.

• Take breaks for water. A mid-morning coffee break or a mid-afternoon snack break are part of many people's daily routines. You also can incorporate drinking water into your daily routine. When pouring your morning coffee or tea, pour yourself a glass of water as well. When reaching for a mid-afternoon snack, pour yourself another glass of water.

• Keep a water journal. Documenting your daily water intake is one way to overcome forgetfulness in relation to remaining hydrated. Smartphone apps like Water Reminder and Plant Nanny can help people remember to drink water throughout the day. For those who prefer a more traditional approach to journaling, keep a small notebook near your desk or in your pocket when going

outdoors so you can always know when your most recent water break occurred.

• Look to foods to stay hydrated. Drinking water isn't the only way to ensure you stay hydrated. Various foods are loaded with water. Henry Ford Health® notes that watermelon, berries, bell peppers, and grapes are water-rich foods that can help you stay hydrated.

Dehydration can creep up on hot summer days and put people in serious jeopardy. That's why it's imperative that people make a concerted effort to hydrate and do not wait until they're thirsty to enjoy a glass of water on a hot summer day.

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