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Why is Glycemic Index (GI) of Carbs so important for Diabetics?

“A healthy diet is important to prevent diabetes. There are no foods, herbs, drinks, or supplements that lower blood sugar. Only medication and exercise can. But there are foods that are low in Glycemic index, people with diabetes must eat”.

Type 2 diabetes is a condition having excess sugar in your blood due to insufficient or lack of production of insulin by the pancreas gland situated behind your stomach in the abdomen. In some situations, may be resistant to the actions of insulin and may not be able to courier the blood sugar to storage sites.

Early symptoms of too much sugar in your blood-we call hyperglycemia are increased thirst, frequent headaches tiredness, rapid heartbeat, vision problems, and a frequent need to pass urine. If you have these symptoms you need to check your fasting blood sugar level. More so if there is a family history of diabetes.

High blood sugar level can be brought down by eating carbs that are low in sugar and high in fiber and with medication.

Now what is glycemic index or GI?

The rates at which different foods raise blood sugar levels are ranked in comparison with the absorption of 50 grams of pure glucose. Pure glucose is used as a reference food and has a GI value of 100

It is a tool used to promote better blood sugar management. By eating foods with lower amounts of sugar in the carbs, meaning having a low GI, can reduce the average blood glucose levels. This is important in reducing the risk of developing diabetes and related complications.

Low GI carbs are foods with less than 55: Intermediate GI foods are carbs with a GI between 55-70

High GI foods are carbs with a GI greater than 70.

So, now let us discuss some foods that are daily eaten by Sri Lankans.

Rice being the staple food that Sri Lankans eat and let us discuss the GI of various kinds of rice, which is so important for diabetic control.

The best low GI rice is long grain Basmati rice, and particularly wholegrain Basmati rice should be the regular rice that should be eaten by people who suffer from Type 2 diabetes. It is a rice that is naturally low to medium energy food but as with all carbs, it is the portion size that is important: an average serving of boiled rice is 150-180g providing 207-248 calories; a small serving 100g provides approximately 138 calories.

Wholegrain Basmati rice has the lowest GI of all rice types, between 50 to 58, and when digested it releases its energy slowly keeping blood sugar levels more stable. In other words the absorption as sugar is very slow and sugar spikes in your blood is unlikely. Further, this rice is high fiber which helps still slower absorption.

Though Basmati is the rice diabetics should eat, it is still important to eat small portion to limit the glycemic load.

So, let me stress that people having diabetes must eat a small amount of brown Basmati rice, in preference to any form of white rice.

It is also observed that eating brown rice is associated with a 16% lower risk of type 2 diabetes.

Let us talk about resistant starch that diabetics are free to enjoy.

Most of the carbs you consume, such as those in grains, pasta, and potatoes, are starches.

Some types of starch are resistant to digestion, hence the term resistant starch. Unfortunately, in the cooking process they may be often destroyed.

Resistant starch functions similarly to soluble, fermentable fiber. It helps feed the friendly bacteria in your gut and increases the production of short-chain fatty acids such as butyrate. Short-chain fatty acids play a key role in gastrointestinal health. For instance, some research indicates that they help prevent and treat colon cancer.

The foods that contain resistant starch includes oats, cooked and cooled rice. One popular preparation method is to cook large batches for the entire week. The others are- beans, legumes, cooked and cooled potatoes, and green bananas.

You will be interested to know that Lampris, biriyani and fried rice have resistant starch, and good to enjoy when you have diabetes.

Studies have shown that resistant starch can help with weight loss and benefit heart health. It can also improve blood sugar management, insulin sensitivity, and digestive health

Sri Lankans do enjoy noodles and pasta to alternate with rice. They have approximately 50 to 55 which is considered low GI. To keep it low in GI add other healthy low GI foods like high-fibre broccoli and chickpeas and you are sure to enjoy a great healthy meal for people having diabetes.

All leafy greens have a low GI. Spinach even has a GI ranking of less than 1 per 1 cup. Kale has an estimated GI score between 2 and 4.

Researchers have carried out studies showing that eating a low-carbohydrate, high-protein diet reduces blood sugar levels.

Another favorite dish that goes with rice, or bread is Dhal curry. Dhal has one of the lowest GIs of any foods ever tested, even though almost two-thirds of its calories come from carbs. GI of dhal is 8.

Dhal is loaded with nutrients. It is super rich in protein, folate, zinc calcium and dietary fiber. Loaded with fibre helps to stabilize blood glucose levels.

A suitable breakfast treat for Sri Lankans and those having diabetes is Mung beans or mung ata the Sinhalese derivative, and is low in GI

It belongs to the legume family like dhal. It has Fiber, manganese, magnesium, vitamin B1,B2,B3.B5,B6 phosphorus, iron, copper, potassium, zinc and selenium.

Are fruits good for diabetics?

There are low GI fruits for diabetics, includes: s for diabetics is-

Avocado

Blackberries

Gooseberry

Guava White Flesh

Palm Fruit

Raspberries

Red Berry

Star Fruit

Strawberry

Wood Apple

High GI fruits that should be eaten least by diabetics include -water melon, pineapple, mango and dates.

Hope you liked this video talk on glycemic index in relation to foods we eat.

Stay safe and goodbye for now.