

Our Mission

The Cray Diabetes Self-Management Center supports the University of Kansas Health System's Endocrinology and Internal Medicine Departments for comprehensive diabetes care. The diabetes center is founded on Bud and Sally Cray's beliefs that diabetes treatment should not be hurried and should be based on mutual conversations, listening and problem solving. These beliefs continue to be the driving model for patient care within the program. Patients have opportunities to visit with diabetes educators, attend support groups and take group classes in addition to their regular doctor and advanced practice professional visits.

For more information contact us at Craydiabetes@kumc.edu or call 913-588-6877.



Endocrinology Corner

Type 2 Diabetes and Heart Health

By Grace Arias, MD

Heart disease is the leading cause of serious health problems in people with diabetes. Diabetes can raise your risk for heart attack, stroke, and heart failure. When blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol are all well managed, your risk can be reduced. The health targets for individuals diagnosed with diabetes are often thought of as the "ABCs": A1c, blood pressure, and cholesterol.

For adults diagnosed with diabetes, an A1c of less than 7% is recommended. For many adults with diabetes, a blood pressure goal of less than 130/80 mmHg is appropriate. Cholesterol management focuses on lowering the LDL, or the "bad" cholesterol. Adults aged 40–75 with diabetes should take a statin medication to help manage their LDL. For people with heart disease risk factors or previous cardiovascular events, and for those with other health issues, all of these goals can be individualized with your healthcare provider. The good news is that it is never too late to take an active role in your heart health.

Staying active can help reduce your risk for a cardiovascular event. Increase your activity to reach a goal of 150 minutes per week of moderate activity, such as brisk walking. This is the goal, and not where everyone will start. Talk with your healthcare provider to come up with a sustainable plan specific to you. Focus on incorporating more vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and lean protein into your diet. A Mediterranean-style eating pattern can be especially beneficial. Limit alcohol and do not smoke. Even if you have used one or both of these substances for some time, reducing or stopping as soon as possible can still have positive effects on your long-term health.

In addition to lifestyle changes, ask your healthcare provider whether medications such as statins, blood pressure medications, SGLT2 inhibitors, or GLP-1 receptor agonists may help reduce your cardiovascular risk. Taking small steps today can lead to meaningful improvements in your heart health over time.

Services Available:

- Medical Visits (MD, PA, NP)
- Individual Diabetes Education
- Group Diabetes Education Classes
- Telehealth options available

Locations:

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Expert Advice

Can a Sunburn Really Raise Your Blood Sugar?

By Haley Bjelobrk, MS, RD, CDCES

Summertime and sunburn can go together like peanut butter and jelly, but there is another reason to slather on that sunscreen besides preventing the pain of a sunburn. If you have diabetes, a sunburn may also cause your blood sugar to rise. Here's why:

Exposure to UV rays, the rays the sun emits, creates a stress response. When your skin gets too much UV exposure, your body responds by releasing stress hormones that cause your blood sugar to rise even if you haven't changed your meals, exercise routine, or medications. A sunburn, like any injury, creates inflammation in your body as it works to repair damaged skin. This inflammation makes your cells less responsive to insulin, causing insulin resistance. While this is a normal body response, it can sometimes lead to unexpected glucose changes and frustration. You may also become dehydrated as the temperature increases. Spending time in the sun often means sweating more, and if you become dehydrated, the glucose in your bloodstream becomes more concentrated.

If you get a sunburn, you should monitor blood sugar more frequently. This will help you keep track of changes as they occur, so they do not come as surprises. Staying hydrated is important for the healing process, but also to help maintain normal glucose levels. If you are taking an SGLT2 inhibitor (a medication whose generic name ends in "-gliflozin"), good hydration is also important to help reduce the risk of DKA. Cool baths and showers can help alleviate pain, along with applying moisturizers containing aloe vera or soy afterwards.

As with many injuries, the best treatment is prevention! The American Academy of Dermatology suggests a water-resistant, broad-spectrum (the bottle may say UVA and UVB or just broad spectrum) sunscreen with a minimum SPF of 30. Sunscreen should be reapplied at least every 2 hours, and sooner if swimming or sweating. Use protective clothing and seek shade, especially during peak UV hours of 10 am to 2 pm.

The bottom line: Protecting your skin from the sun isn't just about preventing a painful burn - it's also another way to help keep your blood sugar in a healthy range. Wearing sunscreen, seeking shade, staying hydrated, and checking your blood sugar more often after a sunburn can help you stay one step ahead.



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Expert Advice

When You Eat Can Affect Blood Sugars

By Felicia Steger, PhD, RD

When we think about nutrition for diabetes, we often focus on what we eat: carbohydrates, fiber, vegetables, protein, and portion sizes. For many years, meal timing received much less attention. While what we eat remains more important, growing evidence suggests that when we eat may also influence blood sugar control.

Blood sugar naturally rises after eating, but the size of that rise can vary between people and even from one meal to the next. Carbohydrate intake is an important factor, but it is not the only one. We have also learned that the same food may produce different metabolic responses depending on the time of day it is eaten. In general, insulin sensitivity is better earlier in the day and worsens as we approach bedtime. One reason may be melatonin. Higher melatonin levels later in the day can dampen insulin release and make it harder for the body to manage carbohydrates.

However, an early dinner may not work for everyone, and evening meals are often a cornerstone of family time and celebrations with our friends and communities. A more practical approach may be to shift more of your food intake earlier in the day while also keeping evening meals and snacks smaller or lower in carbohydrates, particularly close to bedtime. Research has linked eating more later in the day with poorer insulin sensitivity and other markers of poorer cardiometabolic health.

Another strategy being studied is time-restricted eating (TRE), which limits food and calorie-containing beverages to a consistent daily window, often 8 to 10 hours. Our team recently studied TRE in adults with type 2 diabetes. After six months, participants following an 8-hour eating window ending no later than 7:00 p.m. had an average 0.5% reduction in HbA1c, substantial reductions in diabetes medication use, and improvements in blood sugar levels following a meal.

A reasonable goal may be to avoid large meals or high-carbohydrate snacks within a couple of hours of bedtime. When eating later is necessary, choosing a smaller portion with less carbohydrates may help blood sugar return to normal earlier in the night. Ultimately, what you eat still matters, and likely matters more than when you eat. But meal timing is another factor worth considering, particularly because changing when or how much you eat in the evening may be easier for some people than making major changes to their overall diet. People who use insulin or medications that can cause low blood sugar should discuss substantial changes in meal timing with their diabetes care team.

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Healthy Eating Recipe

Fiber: The Superfood

By Race Shepherd, MS, RD, CDCES

Fiber has been a consistent recommendation in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans for decades. Unfortunately, most Americans still fall short of the recommended fiber intake, about 25 grams per day for women and 38 grams per day for men. Fiber supports multiple areas of health, including lowering LDL ("bad") cholesterol, improving blood sugar control, and promoting a healthy weight. Foods high in fiber (about 4g or more per serving) slow down digestion, which can reduce the rise in blood sugar after a meal. Fiber also helps the body remove LDL cholesterol, lowering blood cholesterol levels. Because fiber-rich foods are more filling, they can help you stay satisfied longer, reduce cravings between meals, and make it easier to choose sensible portion sizes. But that's not all! The World Cancer Research Fund and American Cancer Society agree that getting enough fiber may help reduce the risk of several types of digestive tract cancers. Some great high-fiber choices include beans, oats, berries, sweet potatoes, whole wheat bread or tortillas, nuts (such as almonds, pistachios, or walnuts), and air-popped popcorn. If you are looking for practical ways to incorporate more fiber into your diet, ask your doctor about a referral to a Registered Dietitian or Diabetes Educator.

Peanut Butter Protein Balls

Ingredients:

- 3 cups rolled oats (or steel cut)
- ½ cup vanilla protein powder (or preferred flavor)
- 1 cup low-sugar peanut butter
- ½ cup maple syrup
- 3 tbsp chia seeds

Directions:

1. Mix protein powder and rolled oats in a large bowl
2. Add in peanut butter, maple syrup, and chia seeds
(Tip: microwave the peanut butter for ~10 seconds to help make it easier to work with)
3. Add any mix-ins you like! (see ideas below)
4. Roll by hand into ~15 individual balls; use parchment paper to line container to prevent sticking
5. Enjoy immediately, or refrigerate for 30 min for a firmer texture
6. Store in airtight container for up to one week in the fridge, or freeze for longer storage

Mix-in Ideas:

- ¼ cup dark chocolate pieces
- ¼ cup chopped nuts (any kind)
- ¼ to ½ cup unsweetened, dried fruits



Nutrition Facts	
15 servings per container	
Serving size	1 each
Amount Per Serving	
Calories	220
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 10g	13%
Saturated Fat 1.5g	8%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 5mg	2%
Sodium 85mg	4%
Total Carbohydrate 23g	8%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 8g	
Includes 0g Added Sugars	0%
Protein 11g	22%
Not a significant source of vitamin D, calcium, iron, and potassium	
*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

Adapted from <https://thebigmansworld.com/protein-energy-balls/#wprm-recipe-container-29312>

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