

Does your blood sugar affect your mood, sleep and concentration?

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Do you feel tired? Can't concentrate? Have a poor memory? Experience mood swings? Are irritable and can't sleep, get dizzy? Well you're probably thinking... I must have a brain injury!

But, did you know this is also how someone feels when there blood sugars drop?

Our blood sugars rise every time we eat a meal or snack containing carbohydrates. Our body then breaks down carbohydrates into its simplest form of sugar called glucose. To get glucose into the cells we need the help of the hormone insulin which opens up the cell door to let the glucose in. Your cells require this glucose to have enough energy to help us do the things we need to do during the day.

Unfortunately, when we eat carbohydrates in the form of white bread, sugar, cookies, white rice and white pasta, our body processes this type of carbohydrate too quickly, flooding our bloodstream with glucose at a rapid rate. This in turn causes huge surges of insulin to be released to help try and get the glucose out of the blood and into our cell. Unfortunately with these huge spikes in blood sugar comes a huge fall. Having a coffee with a doughnut will ensure this kind of energy surge, but also a massive drop in energy leaving you feeling depressed, irritable, moody and having difficulty concentrating. It also makes us crave more carbohydrates, sugary food or coffee to help raise the blood sugars back up again after the drop. Hence, a vicious cycle begins.

In fact a person with unstable blood sugars is three times more likely to have difficulty losing weight than a person with stable blood sugar. If a poor diet continues and the surges and drops persist, it can cause insulin resistance because the cells start to ignore the insulin knocking on their door to let the glucose in.

A typical Canadian breakfast can consist of a bagel cream cheese with a coffee, or toast and jam, or some kind of sugar laden cereal disguised as a healthy breakfast choice. Unfortunately, these food choices start us off on the wrong track in the morning by raising our blood sugars too high and set the stage for another cycle of peaks

and valleys, and poor food choices for the rest of the day.

So how do we get our blood sugars back on track?

First, **EAT REGULARLY**. This includes 3 meals and 2-3 snacks a day. You should not go more than 3-4 hours before eating. Eating regularly helps steady the rate at which the glucose enters the blood stream, goes in to the cells and tempers the rate of insulin production). If you wait too long between meals, your blood sugars start to drop and your body in turn has to produce cortisol to help raise the sugar levels back up into normal range. Too much cortisol production can lead to that rubber tire around your belly.

Next, each meal should include some kind of **PROTEIN** such as eggs, fish, nuts, legumes or a protein powder, along with complex carbohydrates such as vegetables and whole grains. These are slower burning fuels which help to keep blood sugars in normal range.

AVOID refined carbohydrates, sugar and processed foods such as cookies, muffins, white bread, white rice and white pasta. These are all guilty culprits in raising your blood sugars too high too quickly.

AVOID STRESS and reduce intake of stimulants such as coffee, nicotine and alcohol. Stress and stimulants cause insulin to be released and blood sugars to rise just as they would if eating sugary foods. Stimulants will contribute to the yo-yo effect on your blood sugar.

If you follow those simple rules you might be pleasantly surprised to find

1. You sleep better
2. You concentrate better and your mind stays focussed
3. You're not as irritable or moody
4. Reduced carbohydrate and coffee cravings
5. Weight loss

Food for thought. ♦♦

