

Eating plan for Insulin resistance

What is insulin resistance? Insulin resistance is a sign that your body has to work harder to keep the sugar in your bloodstream within normal ranges. It is part of metabolic problems that include obesity, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), Syndrome X, and type 2 diabetes.

The idea of this eating plan is to avoid spikes of sugar/glucose in your bloodstream. When you have a sudden high level of glucose in your blood, your pancreas sends out a surge of the hormone insulin to try to bring the glucose down to safe levels. Insulin makes the cells more receptive to being 'fed' with the glucose (like using a key to unlock the door) and helps change any leftover glucose (if, for example, the cells are full) turn into fat and stores in your body. Sometimes, the pancreas pumps out more insulin than is actually needed for that particular level of food, and then your blood sugar drops to unsafe (low) levels (hypoglycemia) – and you get hungry and cranky, because your body is looking for fuel to balance the insulin surge. Sometimes, after years of this kind of ping-pong interactions between glucose and insulin, your pancreas gets worn out or the cells become less and less receptive to insulin's 'key in the lock' action.

Everyone needs to eat foods that nourish their bodies. Each individual has differing needs. This eating plan is designed as a way of life, not a short-term weight loss 'diet', although many persons who follow these basic principles will lose weight. If weight loss is your primary goal, you also count calories and aim to eat 500 less calories a day than you need to maintain your current weight. You also need to exercise regularly. This eating plan helps you even out the surges of glucose in your blood stream by encouraging you to eat foods that don't cause the high spikes, while getting enough of a variety to meet your daily nutrient needs.

The foundation of the eating plan has two parts. First, you need to totally avoid all foods that cause severe blood sugar spikes. If you are able to monitor your own blood glucose, you can find this out by trial and error, but published lists of the glycemic index of various foods can really help. Secondly, choose foods with a low G.I. (glycemic index) instead of foods with a G.I greater than or equal to 100 (the G.I. of a slice of white bread). Most people do best if they stay with foods lower than 80. Lists and more explanation of the Glycemic Index can be found: <http://www.mendosa.com/gilists.htm>.

Grains, when eaten, should be whole and not ground or processed. Steamed brown rice, steel cut oats, bulgur wheat, and rye berries are all examples of this. Servings of grain foods should be measured out using an ice-cream scoop to measure with.

Starchy vegetables like potatoes, peas, corn, and lima beans should also be limited. Some may find they do better eliminating them entirely. Fruits are acceptable when eaten entire and not cooked or ground. Juicing the fruits markedly increases the glycemic index, as well as making it easy to overindulge. Avoid fruit juices except maybe a squeeze of lemon or lime juice as a flavoring.

Proteins are essentially unlimited but try to eat vegetable as well as animal source proteins. Stay away from meats and beans that are flavored with sugars – like maple cured hams, or Boston baked beans, or barbecue sauced anything. Good sources of proteins include meats, eggs, dairy, soy products, nuts, beans, seeds (like sunflower, flax, and pumpkin). Commercial nut butters and peanut butter often have added in sugars and hydrogenated fats. Find pure nut butters without additives and sugars.

The foundation of the eating plan is vegetables, and lots of them! With the exception of a few high G.I. tubers, you can eat all the vegetables you want. Make up a big pot of vegetable soup and freeze individual portions. Start lunch or dinner with a big bowl of veggie soup, and start the other meal with a big bowl of salad greens. You can make a meal from steamed veggies and melt some cheese over it. Stir fry Asian vegetables with cubed tofu and a little soy sauce and sesame seeds.

Breakfast and snacks are problems for lots of people who try to change their eating habits. If you aren't into eggs for whatever reasons, try some other protein foods or a low G.I. steamed grain. Add in some fresh fruit and a glass of milk or soymilk. For snacks, prepackaged carrot sticks, apples, hard cheeses, sliced chicken breast or similar lunchmeat has all been used with success.

Fats are part of a balanced diet, but they need to contribute more than just calories. Healthy fats include those contained naturally in most nuts and seeds, like olive oil or avocados. Flaxseed and cold water fish (like salmon) contain essential fatty acids that have been shown to contribute to health in many ways. Most margarines, solid shortening, commercial lard, and similar products contain chemicals called trans-fatty acids that are as bad for your health as the highly saturated fats they were designed to replace. Small amounts of olive oil or butter adds flavor to foods. Part of this program should be that you enjoy your foods, not that you are eating in desperation 'just because it is there'.

Use seasonings like herbs, spices, vinegars, olives and garlic. Avoid ketchup and barbecue sauces, canned cream soups, gravies, sugar, jams jellies and syrups. Cinnamon can add a sweet taste to beverages, as can an herb called Stevia – but try to retrain your taste buds if you can. Drink lots of water, and if you slip up, remember that each day is a new chance to start over again.

More information about Insulin Resistance and PCOS can be found:

<http://www.pcosupport.org/>