

## Blood sugar balance and brain injury recovery

This resource aims to provide information on how a balanced blood sugar can support your recovery. We also provide tips that you may want to consider when looking at balancing your blood sugar to assess if this strategy has a positive impact on your recovery.

Balanced blood sugar levels play an important role in both overall health and specific aspects of wellness, including brain injury recovery. During brain injury recovery, maintaining stable blood sugar levels is essential as it supports optimal brain function, aids in reducing inflammation and facilitates tissue repair.

Fluctuations in blood sugar can exacerbate brain injury symptoms, slowing recovery progress. By making sure your blood sugar stays steady, you're giving your brain the best chance to heal and function at its best.

### What does it mean to have balanced blood sugar levels?

Our blood sugar levels are naturally rising and falling throughout the day, however many of us are experiencing large spikes and crashes due to dietary choices, increased stress, poor sleep and low physical activity. Here are a few simple tips for you to add into your day to help reduce these large spikes and keep your blood sugar levels balanced.



**Remember, you don't have to implement everything at once. You can take a gradual approach and monitor which tips may have a bigger impact for you.**

# Tips and tricks to reduce blood sugar spikes

## Start your day with protein

- Aim for 20-30g of protein at breakfast: Include foods such as eggs, Greek yoghurt, nuts (including peanut and almond butters) and seeds, chicken sausages, cottage cheese, salmon, beans, tofu etc.
- Reduce sweet breakfast items such as fruit juices, cereals, granolas and toast with jams and honey. Instead eat whole fruits.
- Add in sources of fibre and healthy fats such as nuts, seeds, avocado, extra virgin olive oil, whole fruits and vegetables.

## Balance your meals and snacks

- Try to include fibre, protein and healthy fats with each meal and include at least two of them with snacks. An example would be a piece of fruit with a piece of cheese or a handful of nuts.
- Aim to have half your plate filled with colourful vegetables, a quarter protein and a quarter complex carbohydrate.
- Sprinkle some nuts and seeds, drizzle extra virgin olive oil, include avocado or olives for a source of healthy fats.



## Eat your veggies first

- Fibre lines our intestines and this helps to slow down and reduce the amount of glucose absorbed into our blood, in turn reducing the blood sugar spike. By starting a meal with vegetables, we are able to reduce the overall impact our meal will have on our blood sugar levels.

## Tips and tricks to reduce blood sugar spikes

### Save sweet foods for after a meal

- Eating sugar on an empty stomach will create a much greater glucose spike than eating it after a meal, as the fibre, protein and fats in our savoury meal will slow down and reduce the amount of sugar that is entering our blood. By saving desserts, chocolate and sweet treats for after a healthy balanced meal, we are still able to enjoy some of our favourite foods in a healthier way.



### Choose complex carbohydrates over simple carbohydrates

- Carbohydrates, once digested, release glucose into our blood for us to use as energy. However, if we eat too much of them, we will experience a blood sugar spike.
- Opt for potatoes, sweet potatoes, whole grains such as brown rice, buckwheat, quinoa, rye bread etc over the more processed carbohydrates such as white bread, pasta, crackers, muffins etc. The complex carbohydrates contain more fibre and, as mentioned above, fibre is very important when it comes to helping us keep stable blood sugars as it reduces the speed at which the glucose enters our blood.





# Tips and tricks to reduce blood sugar spikes

## Go for a gentle walk after your meal

- When we move, our muscles take in the glucose in our blood for energy. By going for a walk, or even doing calf raises while sat down, we are able to reduce our blood sugars by moving the glucose from our blood into our muscles.



## Reduce stress

Our dietary choices are not the only thing that will affect our blood sugars, stress and sleep also has a great effect on our blood sugar levels.

- Aim to get 7-9hrs of sleep a night, even better if we go to sleep and wake up at the same time each day or as close as possible.
- Practice stress-reducing techniques such as meditation, yoga or spending time in nature.

## About Megan

Megan is a certified health coach with a Master's of Science in Human Nutrition. She is passionate about how the foods we eat can affect our health and wellbeing, as well as finding ways to make healthy eating more delicious and convenient. She believes health and wellness should be accessible to all and needs a holistic approach that takes into consideration mind, body and spirit.

