

Carbs spike lunchtime glucose

Q My doctor said my Hemoglobin A1c is slightly above normal range and diagnosed me with prediabetes. I'm well informed about nutrition and believe I am eating a very healthy diet. Because of this, she suggested I try continuous blood glucose monitoring (CGM) for two weeks. We learned my healthy lunch made my blood sugar spike higher than my goal. I really like a lunch of low-fat yogurt with active cultures, reduced-fat crackers (usually Triscuits or Good Thins), fresh fruit (usually a banana or mandarin orange) and a small piece of chocolate. How do you suggest I improve my lunch? KM, Greenville



KATHY KOLASA

A Your lunch options are all healthy but when eaten together at the same meal it appears to be too much carbohydrate for your body to handle at that time of day. I asked Julia Firmhaber, a second-year Brody medical student to make some suggestions. Julia has been volunteering this summer with Kay Craven, a dietitian and certified diabetes educator specialist and the director of nutrition for ECU Physicians.

Yogurt, crackers, fruit and chocolate all contain carbohydrates or carbs for short. You appear to be consuming at least 80 grams of carbs, even while following the recommended serving sizes on the packages. Because you were able to measure your blood sugar response with a CGM you were able to see that this amount of carbs caused a blood glucose spike for you at lunchtime. The number of servings of carbs a person should have within a day varies based on his/her personal calorie needs, activity level and health goals.

The spike in blood sugar is because your body is showing signs of insulin resistance, meaning your body isn't using its insulin very well. When it's working at its best, insulin helps the body take the carbs you eat, turn them into sugar, also known as glucose, and move it from the blood to the body's cells to use for energy. If you are insulin resistant and eat a large amount of carbs, they still turn into sugar but get stuck in the bloodstream, raising your blood sugar.

Insulin resistance can vary throughout the day, so if you really want to stick to the yogurt you are eating, maybe try and move it to breakfast, mid-morning snack, or dessert and see if that makes a difference in your blood sugar. Although one person might consume 80 grams of carbs at lunch

and not have a glucose spike, another person like you may have a spike. Spacing carbs in smaller amounts throughout the day is one way to help your body regulate these spikes. You can get an individualized plan from your health care provider and a registered dietitian nutritionist (RD).

In addition to spacing out your carbs, swapping higher for lower carb options may help you still eat your favorite food combinations while keeping your blood sugars under control. Yogurt can be a sneaky source of carbs because of the natural milk sugars and the added sugars in sweetened yogurts. I would look for one that has no added sugar and less than 5 grams of carbs. I found two great lower-carb yogurts in a local grocery store that you might try.

Two Good, a low-fat Greek yogurt, has 3 grams of carbs in a 5.3 oz cup that comes in many flavors. It is sweetened with stevia, which doesn't add calories or carbs. A single serving cup also has 80 calories, 2 grams of fat, and 12 grams of protein. Fage nonfat plain 0% Greek yogurt has a much different flavor profile and 5 grams of carbs in a 6 oz. cup. You could mix your fruit into it for some flavor and sweetness. Or you could stir in a bit of vanilla extract and cinnamon to add taste without extra carbs or calories. A single serving without added fruit has 90 calories, 0 grams of fat, and 18 grams of protein.

Readers may have seen commercials for the CMG technology that lets you track your blood sugar without sticking your finger. At this time, typically only individuals who have been diagnosed with diabetes and using insulin are prescribed to use a CGM. A person using CMG, wears a small sensor on the back of her arm or on her stomach. The sensor tests the blood sugar every few minutes and transmits the data to a monitor.

You were fortunate to be able to afford this technology as most insurance only covers the cost of the scanner and sensors for people with diabetes who are on insulin. You could get similar results by taking snapshots of your blood sugar throughout the day using finger sticks. As CGM becomes more widely available, they may be used more often as a treatment tool for those with diabetes and not on insulin or for those with prediabetes who are trying to tweak their diet to keep their blood sugar in the goal range.

Professor emeritus Kathy Kolasa, a registered dietitian nutritionist and Ph.D., is an affiliate professor in the Brody School of Medicine at ECU. Contact her at kolasa@ecu.edu.

Harissa spices up any dish

If you're looking for a condiment that multitasks and tastes stand-alone delicious, then look no further than harissa.



LYNDA BALSLEV

Harissa is a smoky red pepper sauce traditionally used in North African cuisine. You may know it as a fiery one-note paste sold in a tube or as a jarred red sauce with a salsa consistency.

Essentially, harissa is a paste or puree of red peppers and chiles combined with other ingredients, such as garlic, citrus and spices. Its nuances, heat and flavor will vary from cook to cook, influenced by the choice of peppers and aromatics.

This recipe is the harissa sauce I have been making for years, and it's positively addicting. It's an extremely versatile condiment; I use it on just about everything.

I combine roasted sweet bell peppers with fiery chiles for a balance of smoke, sweetness and heat. The heat is intentionally kept at a moderate level to prevent the sauce from overpowering everything it touches.

I add a dollop of tomato paste, which lends a hint of fruity acidity while helping to thicken the sauce and round out the flavors.

How to use harissa
1. Marinate skirt or flank steak or chicken thighs in the sauce, then grill over indirect heat.

2. Drizzle harissa over roasted vegetables, eggs, grilled meats and fish steaks, such as swordfish or halibut.

3. Use it as a dip for pita chips, veggies or meatballs. Or mix a spoonful into other dips such as tzatziki and hummus for a punch of flavor.

4. Add a dollop or two to soups, ragouts and stews



LYNDA BALSLEV/TASTEFOOD

Harissa.

as a secret flavor-boosting ingredient.

5. Elevate your prepared rice or couscous to the next level with a swipe of harissa and a shower of chopped herbs and lemon zest.

As you can see, this sauce is indeed versatile, a welcome addition to the summer picnic table. When making the sauce, be sure to toast and grind the whole seeds. This extra step imparts a fantastic flavor to the harissa, which is deeper than if you use pre-ground spices. For best flavor and consistency, roast fresh peppers. If using jarred roasted peppers, be sure to drain them well.

Note that the finished sauce will be souppier and sweeter with jarred peppers than if you roast your own peppers. If you prefer more heat, you can choose not to seed the chile peppers — it's up to you!

Combine the peppers, seeds, chiles, garlic, tomato paste, oil, salt and black pepper in the bowl of a food processor. Process to blend. Taste for seasoning.

Transfer to a jar and refrigerate until use. The flavors will develop with time. Store for up to one week.

Lynda Balslev is cookbook author, tester and editor. Taste Food is distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication.

Ingredients:

- 2 large red bell peppers
- 1 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 teaspoon coriander seeds
- 1 teaspoon caraway seeds
- 2 red jalapeno chiles, seeded, coarsely chopped
- 2 garlic cloves
- 1 tablespoon tomato paste
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt, or more to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Steps:

Grill the whole peppers over high heat until evenly charred, turning as needed. If using an oven, halve the peppers. Place skin-side up on a baking tray and broil until the skin is charred. Transfer the peppers to a bowl and cover. Let steam for 10 minutes, then peel away the skin, remove any ribs and seeds, and coarsely chop.

Toast the cumin, coriander and caraway seeds in a dry skillet over medium heat until aromatic and beginning to pop, 1 to 2 minutes. Transfer to a mortar with pestle or a spice grinder and grind the seeds to a fine powder.

Combine the peppers, seeds, chiles, garlic, tomato paste, oil, salt and black pepper in the bowl of a food processor. Process to blend. Taste for seasoning.

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Find some SAINity at SAIN Kava + Tea Bar on Fifth Street

BY CHRISTINA RUOTOLO
Hot Dish

According to legend, the history of tea began as early as 2737 BC when the Chinese emperor, Shen Nung was sitting underneath a tree. His servant was boiling water for him to drink when a few leaves from a Camellia Sinensis tree fell into the water, creating the first cup of tea. It is estimated today that, on average, 150 million Americans drink tea on a daily basis. In 2019, Americans consumed over 84 billion servings of tea. From black tea, to green tea, to herbal tea, there are hundreds of varieties, each with its own benefits, health benefits, and tastes. It's no wonder that tea is the second most consumed beverage, right after water.

For tea lovers and folks who want to try, SAIN Kava + Tea Bar, 110 E. Fifth St., is a hip, quaint space nestled in downtown Greenville with its own funky welcoming tea vibe. The business opened back in February and has been brewing up tea in all its medicinal and



Kava in pineapple juice.

magic wonder ever since. Co-owners, Mike Wallace and Jermaine Harris both had a love of tea and wanted to bring their knowledge and tastes to Greenville. SAIN specializes in herbal tea blends as well as kava shots, kava mixed drinks, and a variety of herbal remedy drinks. "SAIN is not just an herbal tea and kava bar; it's a mindset that goes back to the way things were supposed to be," Mike said. "Before, we manufactured our health and well-being. Our beverages help you get back to what's real."

Mike, who studied herbology and alternative medicine, came up with the name SAIN when he was typing out a family name St. Clair in a database when he was sidetracked by his rambunctious daughter. He looked back at the screen and noticed he

had typed SAIN instead. He looked up the meaning and in french it meant health. A perfect name.

Each tea beverage on the menu offers different health benefits from boosting metabolism, keeping you focused or calming your digestive system. Herbal teas re-shape and re-surface your inner wheels, allowing you a "sain" ride. Caffeinated options include the hand-blended Verde Cool made with matcha, peppermint and coconut, which have a cooling and comforting effect. Each tea is expertly blended to produce maximum health benefits.

I tried the Thai BOBA tea with black tapioca pearls. It's served cold and made with a Thai black tea blend along with traditional chai spices. It's earthy with a spice-noted front flavor profile. It is warm and enchanting. The tapioca pearls nestled in the sugary black bottom soak up the spices, so you get an extra warm hit of spice when you pull one through the straw. Caffeine-free tea drinks include a variety of herbal teas and flavors. The blending of herbal teas is a hand-crafted science, and Mike can create a blend that will work with the homeopathic needs you are seeking.

Some of the options include Lionel Gold made with turmeric, ginger, lemongrass, licorice root, orange peel, lemon peel, black pepper and natural citrus flavors, hand-blended to maximize turmeric's amazing anti-inflammatory properties and offer up a soothing and enjoyable taste.

They also serve an aromatic, Menosha tea to aid in menopause, soothe the mind and support hormonal balance. It features over

a dozen herbal teas from raspberry leaf to birch bark to dandelion root and sage. They even have teas to soothe a sore throat, help with insomnia and calm the digestive tract.

Next, I tried the Prescott iced tea made with butterfly pea flower tea, cucumber, lemon peel and lemonade. When you add citrus to the blue pea flower tea, the color changes to purple, giving it an amethyst hue. It was cool and refreshing with soft ribbons of lemon flavor. You can taste hints of soothing lemon balm too. A perfect drink to enjoy any time of day.

Now it's time to learn about kava. Kava is made from the roots of the Piper methysticum, a plant found in the south Pacific. You soak the roots and stems in water then extract the liquid and use it as a herbal remedy. It has been known to relieve pain, help reduce anxiety, help with focus and insomnia. Many people call it an anxiety pill in a glass.

Upon initial sipping, you will start to feel your tongue go numb slightly. As the tea works on your GABA-re-

ceptors, some people feel an overwhelming calm or euphoria. Kava acts on the central nervous system and stimulates dopamine in the brain. Many recovering drug addicts and alcoholics have used kava to assist in their recovery process.

Instead of trying straight kava, I opted for a blend in pineapple juice. After my initial sips, I felt what I would call euphoric clarity about 30 minutes after I drank it. My head didn't pop up and spin in a circle, I didn't get a stomach ache, and I didn't experience any dizziness or discomfort. If you are pregnant or have Parkinson's disease, you will want to avoid using kava. Stop by the store and Mike can educate you on the benefits of adding kava to your wellness plan. It was a unique experience and worth learning about and trying.

If you haven't visited a tea bar before, or are ready to add tea to your health and wellness routine, check out SAIN Kava + Tea Bar. They are open 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Monday-Saturday. Follow them on Facebook or on Instagram @areyouinsane.

SAIN Kava + Tea Bar

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Located in Uptown Greenville, NC at 110 E. 5th Street

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