

Holistic Wellness

Getting Off the Sugar Rollercoaster



By Jackie Dobrinska

What do food cravings, mood swings, depression, anxiety, fatigue, irritability and even those extra pounds around your belly have in common? They are the result of a roller coaster going on in your blood stream.

While the ups and downs of crazy rides might be exciting, they can play havoc on your energy and health. The key lies in balancing your blood sugar.

“Blood-sugar spikes and bad fats are the insidious background of most of our modern maladies,” says Charlie Wright, wellness crew director of Warren Wilson College, “from autoimmune conditions to inflammation.”

Blood sugar is the amount of glucose in your blood, and it provides the bulk of your energy. It also feeds your brain and, because the brain needs a constant and steady supply of glucose, the body has developed a very finely tuned mechanism to regulate it.

If you binge on cookies, bread or high-sugar, low-fiber and nutrient-poor foods, the body produces insulin, which stores the excess sugar from your blood as fat. If you skip meals, your brain feels starved and the body produces glycogen, pulling energy from lean muscles to increase blood sugar. With too much use, these mechanisms can get taxed, as is the case in type-2 diabetes.

“The problem is that our culture is addicted to sugar,” continues Wright. Today, the average American eats 66 pounds of sugar a year, not counting fruit juice. That’s 19.5 teaspoons per day. It comes mostly from soft drinks, candy and processed foods as well as white sugar, corn syrup, white flour and white rice. For the most part, if the food is packaged, it will spike your glucose. These types of carbohydrates enter into your blood stream quickly,

and create an addictive response in your brain. Complex carbohydrates, like potatoes and whole wheat breads, while slower to enter the blood stream, will still spike glucose levels. Other offenders include caffeine and stress, both of which affect the adrenal glands, hormones and blood-sugar levels.

Yet, dieting is not the answer. According to Dr. Susan Bradt, MD, who practices integrative medicine with Family-to-Family on Charlotte Street in Asheville, skipping meals or limiting food doubles the harm. “Restricting calories causes blood sugar levels to drop. The body will burn lean muscle...the very tool that burns fat. So when people go off their diets, they put the weight back on like crazy.”

So what is the key to greater blood-sugar stability? Dr. Brian Lewis, MD, of Integrative Family Medicine on Depot Street in Asheville tells his patients to eat whole, fresh, real food and make sure protein, fat and fiber are part of every meal and snack. “If you eat meat, make sure it is from good sources, and cut grains to one cup, cooked, per day.”

Some of the best sources of protein include wild-caught fish, grass-fed beef, free-range eggs and poultry and raw or fermented dairy. Healthy fats include coconut oil, grass-fed cow butter, nuts and seeds. Bradt recommends a soluble fiber supplement, and Wright suggests two supplements, chromium and vanadium, to combat nutrient deficiency.

As you stabilize your blood sugar, you will have more energy, less cravings and better moods. A notable side effect is you may lose some of that stubborn belly fat too.

This article contains general information about medical conditions and treatments and is not to be considered expert advice. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider before beginning any new treatment or diet. Jackie Dobrinska is a wellness coach. For upcoming programs visit asimplevibrantlife.com, e-mail jldobrinska@gmail.com or call 828.337.2737.