

Tips for controlling blood sugar on Valentine's Day

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It's no secret that Valentine's Day is associated with indulging in sweet treats. For those who are living with pre diabetes or diabetes a little preparing could help keep high blood sugar spikes from ruining Valentine's Day.

Sweet treats & blood glucose

Chocolates and sweets are high in carbohydrates but they're not all the same. While shopping compare food labels of products side by side. Be sure to look at 'Total Carbohydrate' and not just at sugar to see if a food will raise your blood sugar. Determine the total carbohydrates as follows: Total carbohydrates are made up of Fiber, Sugar and Starch. Keep in mind, sugar and starch will break down into glucose impacting your blood sugar.

What about Chocolate? Chocolate is made from refined cacao beans. There are many kinds and prices of chocolate. Don't let price and packaging deceive you about taste, calories, fat and sugar. The only way to know if the product is pure is to check for added ingredients or added sugars on the food label.

Overall, chocolate is high in fat, high in sugar. The problem is not so much about eating chocolate, more importantly it is the amount or portion size that will have the biggest impact on blood sugar spikes.

Dark chocolate is commonly lower in sugar and contains more cocoa than milk chocolate. It also has more than twice as many beneficial flavonols (flavonoid compounds work as antioxidants) than milk chocolate. Many people prefer dark chocolate due to its satisfyingly sweet, yet bitter taste. Again, portion size is important.

Cut calories and carbohydrates –Grading chocolate and sprinkling it over fruit, or sugar free pudding allows you to have chocolate while keeping the service size small. Controlling your portion size and buying individually packaged serving size treats are also good choices.

What about products labeled 'sugar free or diabetic candy'?

Sugar free candy and chocolate can be a tasteful substitute for the real thing. Be aware that chocolate, candy or desserts labelled as 'diabetic' contain sweeteners and affect blood sugar. They're not always lower in calorie, and could contain high levels of Trans fat, that are the considered the bad fats. Sweeteners such as sorbitol found in sugar free candy can have an effect on your digestion system causing a laxative effect. Portion control and eating sweets in moderation are important.

There is no getting around it, all sweets even sugar-free sweets affect blood sugar levels. Most healthcare providers will agree that there is no problem in eating a sweet treat every once in a while. If you have diabetes and you need help with meal planning ask your healthcare team.

Source: Michigan State University Extension

