

# Steroid Induced Diabetes: Dietary advice

## What is Steroid-induced diabetes?

Steroid induced diabetes is when the level of sugar in your blood is too high. This can be caused by Dexamethasone (a steroid medication), which is often needed for treatment of cancer.

Steroid induced diabetes is usually a temporary condition - in general your blood sugar level will return to normal after you stop taking Dexamethasone.

### Symptoms of Diabetes

- Passing a lot of urine, especially at night.
- Being really thirsty.
- Losing weight without trying to.
- Genital itching or thrush.
- Cuts and wounds take longer to heal.
- Fatigue.
- Blurred vision.

## Dietary advice

You can help control the level of sugar in your blood by maintaining a healthy balanced diet. The following are simple steps, which you can take to help control your blood sugar level:

- Eat regular meals and avoid skipping meals.
- Try to eat a starchy carbohydrate food with each meal. These foods cause a gradual rise in your blood sugar e.g. cereals, bread, rice, pasta, potato, noodles, chappatis, pitta bread, plantain, sweet potato or couscous. Where possible choose wholegrain or granary versions of bread, cereal, rice and pasta - these foods are high in fibre.
- Keep sugary foods to an occasional treat (including biscuits, sweets, chocolate, jams, cake, ice-cream and sugary drinks), as these will cause your blood sugar levels to rise quickly.

- Include fruit and vegetables in your diet - these are a good source of fibre, vitamins and minerals. Fruit contains a natural source of sugar, therefore it is a good idea to space out your fruit portions throughout the day rather than eat these in one go. Try to only have one small glass of fruit juice once a day.
- Avoid drinking sugary drinks such as full fizzy drinks and squashes. Instead choose 'diet', 'zero', or 'no added' sugar type drinks.
- Avoid adding sugar, honey or syrups to tea/coffee and cereals - artificial sweeteners are safe to use.

## Food packaging

- Information on the food packet can help you decide whether foods are healthy and suitable.
- Ingredients list – this can be a simple way to tell whether a food is suitable. If sugar is high up the ingredients list, then the food will be high in sugar.
- Alternatively you can look at the food label - Nutritional information is often given as amount per 100g. Choose foods using the traffic light system: You need to look at per 100g column and look at the value for 'carbohydrates of which sugars'.
- Low sugar food contains less than 5g per 100g.

## Diabetic foods

Foods labelled 'suitable for diabetics' have no special benefit. They are often high in calories, may still increase your blood glucose level and may have a laxative effect! Ordinary packaged food, eaten as part of a healthy diet is suitable; just remember to consider portion sizes and how often you have them.

## For further information see:

[www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts](http://www.bda.uk.com/foodfacts)

<https://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Managing-your-diabetes/Healthy-eating/>

Created by Dr Antonia Creak, Consultant Neuro-oncologist and Gill Walsh, Macmillan Neuro-oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist, in consultation with Mhairi Donald, Macmillan Consultant Dietician.

© Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust

### Disclaimer

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is in no way intended to replace professional clinical advice by a qualified practitioner.

Ref number: 868.1

Publication Date: October 2020

Review Date: October 2023

