What Fruits Are Good and Bad for Diabetics?

by AFRA WILLMORE

Fruits for Diabetics

It’s a brand new, shiny year and I’m sure I am not alone in vowing that this year will be the year I will take full control of my diabetes and lead a happier, healthier life.Taking a good hard look at your diet is a great place to start.

When people are first diagnosed with type 2 diabetes, they often are too strict with their diet denying themselves pretty much everything but dust – sugar-free dust, of course. Usually, a good dietician and online resources will help educate you and will help you realize that nothing is banned. It’s just a case of “everything in moderation.”

Then as more time goes by, you might find yourself slipping into bad habits and before you know it your blood glucose levels are haywire, and you are finding scary and stern answer machine messages from your diabetes care team.

Everything goes back to looking at your diet. One thing which is often missing from the intake of those with diabetes is fruit, mainly because of the mixed messages you get about fruit, carbs and sugars, and the impact they can have on blood sugars.

The good news is that there are some fruits which are better than others for a diabetes-friendly diet.

Whole Fruit vs. Fruit Juice

It’s very useful to know that whole fruits are significantly better for those with diabetes than fruit juices. Eaten with the skin or peel on they contain fiber which is good for the heart and digestive health and will help you feel full up for longer.

One portion of fruit juice can contain the equivalent of several portions of fruit which can cause your blood sugar to spike.

It’s much better to consume small portions of whole fruit like grapes, apricots, apples, pears, and peaches throughout the day keeping those blood glucose levels to remain more stable.

Whole fruit eaten with the skin on contains fiber which will help convince your growling stomach that you are in fact full, and will keep you feeling satisfied for longer than a swig of fruit juice can.

Plus, there’s the danger that many juices contain water, added sugars or sweeteners and a whole host of preservatives. They may be made from concentrate which isn’t necessarily a bad thing but may mean your cup of juice contains fewer natural vitamins and minerals and fiber.

Always read the label to ensure the juice you buy is as near to whole fruit as possible, or switch to a fruit and

vegetable blend which may have more fiber.

Juice may be convenient and is certainly better than no fruit at all if you have run out of fresh fruit but limit intake to half a cup a day.

What About Canned or Preserved Fruit?

The big fact about canning or other methods of preserving fruit is that they generally involve heat or some form of sugar.

Canning fruit usually involves heat which is not good for the vitamin C content in fruit. However, vitamins A and B, and potassium are slightly hardier and may survive the canning process.

Now, the interesting thing is that fresh fruit loses vitamin C and other nutrients the longer it is from the day it was picked so especially with out0-of-season fruit – which has many air miles behind it or fruit which has sat for days in the grocery store then in your fruit bowl – may have fewer vitamins in than the tinned peaches which have been in your store cupboard for weeks.

It's best to choose in-season fruit – which will likely be cheaper than imported fruit – or choose fruit grown locally if possible, refresh your fruit bowl frequently, rather than stock up once weekly, and eat it while it’s at its best.

If you can’t get to the store, aren’t keen on the fruit in season or simply bored with the limited choice in season, you can enjoy canned fruit (after checking that doesn’t have added sugar.) Canned fruit salads are particularly bad for these hidden naughties.

Frozen fruit has similar benefits to canned fruit in that it is generally frozen fresh.

Preserved fruits however often use sugar or alcohol – sugar by another name – to aid the preservation process and might be nice for an occasional treat but not as a regular substitute for fresh fruit.

What Are the Best Fruits for Diabetics?

There is a vast choice of fruit which, eaten in small portions throughout the day, can not only be acceptable in a diabetes-friendly diet but even beneficial.

Which fruits can you eat?

- Apples
- Pears
- Grapes
- Berries
- Cantaloupe
- Citrus fruits
- Papaya
- Pineapple
- Mango

All of those lovely colorful high antioxidant fruits which brighten up your fruit bowl and your snack plate.

Antioxidants are important because they help prevent cell damage and may help reduce inflammation caused by oxidative stress. This oxidative stress may contribute to complications of diabetes. To get the most antioxidants, look for fruits with a variety of bright colors and full flavors.

Remember that golden rule for those with diabetes – everything in moderation.

Therefore choose small apples, pears, and other whole fruits and don’t eat an entire pineapple in one sitting! Portion up that mango and divide grapes into snack portions rather than pick at the whole bunch while cooking dinner. Can you tell I’m speaking from experience?

Are There Fruits for Diabetics to Avoid?

Dried fruit should be eaten with caution as even a small portion can contain a huge, concentrated portion of carbohydrates. Although they make a handy snack or can add flavor to a dull bran breakfast make sure you only consume one to two tablespoons in a portion.

So there you have it – a diabetic's guide to fruit. Now that you know which fruits you can eat, why not add these fruits to your drinks?