Is Honey a Good Sugar Substitute for Diabetics?

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Honey and Diabetes

Do you have type 2 diabetes but love a bit of honey on a biscuit or maybe in your tea? Are you may be worried that isn't the best choice?

In the past several years there has been a hot debate brewing as to whether honey is a safe food for people with diabetes to consume. There have been various research projects done on it even.

Let's take a look at how honey interacts with diabetes and find out if you need to take any special precautions to enjoy this naturally sweet treat.

Regular Honey vs. Raw Honey: Which One Is Better?

Honey is what's left after the flower nectar that bees bring to their honeycombs has evaporated. Honey is sweeter than granulated sugar so one good thing is that it probably takes less honey to sweeten something than it would sugar.

One tablespoon of honey contains about 17 grams of carbohydrates. So, since 15 grams is considered one serving of carbs, one tablespoon is about one carbohydrate serving. Depending on how much honey it takes to sweeten what you are eating, that could easily add up quickly.

Something interesting to note is that raw honey will have more of "the good stuff" like vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. This is because processed honey has been heated and filtered and that process ends up removing all the healthier aspects.

If you are a honey fan, buying local, raw honey is a better choice than store bought, processed varieties.

Honey and Diabetic Blood Sugar Levels: The Glycemic Index

The glycemic index (GI) is a measurement of how high a food will raise your blood sugar. The higher the number, the higher the spike. The lower the number, the lower the spike.

In general, choosing lower GI foods is a better option but if you are choosing a high GI food, you can help balance the effects with a low GI food.

What's to note here is that honey is typically considered a low GI food as it's Glycemic Index number is 55.

Your doctor or a dietician can guide you best on how this works with your particular dietary needs.

Is Honey Good for Diabetics?

There have been and are various ongoing studies regarding honey and diabetes. Certain things that have already been shown are some of the fabulous nutritional benefits (particularly of raw honey). Some benefits of honey for diabetics may include:

- Ability to lower blood sugar.
- Ability to increase insulin levels.
- Antioxidant effects (also helpful for other diseases).
- Anti-bacterial effects.
- Anti-microbial effects.
- Prevention of inflammatory processes from diabetes.

Can I Cook With Honey Instead of Sugar Then?

The short answer is yes. A quick peek on Google or Pinterest can yield a whole host of recipes using honey instead of sugar. But, we need to share a little more information on that for you to do it effectively.

Honey is more acidic and 20 percent water. It burns faster and is also sweeter than sugar. So, we pulled together some tips from our friend the Internet to help you be able to use honey instead.

Various chefs have offered this advice in particular if you are using honey in baking recipes:

1. Because honey is sweeter, we're using less. For every cup of sugar, use only ½ to ? cup of honey.
2. Since honey burns baster, reduce the temperature of your oven by 25 degrees if baking.
3. With the acidic properties of honey, you will use baking soda to balance it out some. Add ¼ teaspoon of baking soda for every cup of honey used.
4. Since honey is made up of water, for every cup of honey, subtract a ¼ cup of other liquids from the recipe.

Following the above swaps can enable you to swap out the sugar for honey to get more of the health benefits that honey offers.

Putting it All Together: Can Diabetics Eat Honey?

In conclusion, eating honey is fine when treated like other carbs. Introduce honey slowly and see how it affects your sugars. And, to get more of honey's nutritional benefits, opt for raw honey.

Do you use honey instead of sugar for sweetening? If so, tell us about it.