

Diabetes and Sweeteners: Honey vs. Granulated Sugar

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Keeping blood glucose levels under control is important for people with diabetes. Good control can help prevent or slow down complications of diabetes, such as nerve, eye, or kidney damage. It can also help save your life.

No one knows exactly why high glucose levels cause complications in people with diabetes, but keeping glucose levels as normal as possible can truly be a lifesaver, says Amy Kimberlain, R.D.N., L.D.N., R.Y.T., a registered dietitian at the [Diabetes Research Institute](#) in Miami.

Added sugars, such as white granulated sugar and honey, are near the top of the list of foods that can cause blood sugar levels to spike. But do all added sugars affect blood sugar in the same way?

Health Benefits of Honey

Researchers have studied many potential benefits of honey, from how a topical application may help [treat wounds](#) to benefits for [cholesterol management](#). Some research has even looked into whether honey could be used for blood glucose management.

One [study](#) found that regularly consuming honey could have beneficial effects on body weight and blood lipids in people with diabetes. A significant increase in hemoglobin A1c, however, was also observed. Another [study](#) showed that honey caused a lower glycemic response than that of glucose alone. In addition, honey has anti-microbial and anti-bacterial properties, and is a source of antioxidants, all of which can benefit people with diabetes.

Does this mean it's better for people with diabetes to consume honey instead of sugar? Not exactly. Both of these studies recommended more in-depth research on the subject. You should still limit the amount of honey you consume, just as you would sugar.

Honey vs. Sugar

Your body breaks down the foods you eat into glucose, which it then uses for fuel. Sugar is made up of 50 percent glucose and 50 percent fructose. Fructose is a type of sugar that is quickly broken down and can more easily lead to spikes in blood glucose.

Honey is also made up mostly of sugar, but it's only 30 percent glucose and less than 40 percent fructose. It contains other sugars and trace elements, which bees pick up while pollinating plants. These can be helpful for allergy sufferers.

Honey is lower on the glycemic index than granulated sugar, but honey has more calories. One tablespoon of honey comes in at 68 calories, whereas 1 tablespoon of sugar contains 49 calories.

Use Less for More Taste

One of the biggest benefits of honey for people with diabetes might just be in its concentrated flavor. This means you can add less of it without sacrificing taste. It's recommended that people with diabetes treat honey like any other added sugar, despite the possible health benefits associated with honey. The [American Heart Association](#) recommends limiting added sugars to no more than 6 teaspoons (2 tablespoons) for women and 9 teaspoons (3 tablespoons) for men. You should also count your carbs from honey and add them in to your daily limits. One tablespoon of honey has 17 grams of carbs.