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The Carb-Fat Diet: A Sustainable Solution to Insulin Resistance

4 Mediterranean Recipes for More Omega-3

Tea vs. Coffee: Which Supports Your Health and Energy?

5 Ways Processed Foods Spike Your Blood Sugar

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

If you've ever felt overwhelmed by conflicting health advice—coffee or tea, low-carb or low-fat, clean eating or convenience—you're not alone. That's why in this edition, we're cutting through the confusion with clear, practical insights to help you make smarter choices for your health.

We begin with our premier article on the Carb-Fat Diet—a refreshingly realistic approach to weight loss that tackles insulin resistance at its core. By alternating low-carb and low-fat days, this strategy helps you stabilize blood sugar, boost metabolism, and enjoy lasting results without the rigidity of traditional diets. It's designed for long-term success and everyday flexibility.

We also take a closer look at your favorite morning cup—coffee or tea—and how each beverage delivers unique health benefits, from sharper focus to calmer energy. You'll find out which one suits your needs best, depending on your wellness goals and caffeine sensitivity.

In another must-read, we break down five sneaky ways ultra-processed foods disrupt your blood sugar—even if you don't have diabetes. From fiber loss to gut imbalance, these foods can silently fuel inflammation and metabolic stress. But the good news? Small changes—like adding anti-inflammatory ingredients—can help you stay on track without overhauling your routine.

Finally, we explore omega-3s and their powerful benefits for mood, sleep, and heart health, plus offer Mediterranean-inspired recipes to help you get more of these essential fats—no supplements required.

Here's to progress, not perfection—with every bite, every sip, and every small step.

For your health,

Cheryl Ravey
Editor, Home Cures That Work

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The Carb-Fat Diet:

A Sustainable Solution to Insulin Resistance

A FLEXIBLE, SCIENCE-BACKED WAY TO LOSE WEIGHT AND CONTROL INSULIN —BY NEVER MIXING CARBS AND FAT ON THE SAME DAY.

BY DR. SCOTT SAUNDERS, M.D.

I have been following the research on diets for over thirty years. It is amazing how many diet books are out there. Approximately 4 million new book titles are published annually worldwide. Nonfiction accounts for about 88% of these, or roughly 3.52 million titles yearly. Assuming diet books represent a small but notable fraction of nonfiction —say, 1-2% based on their perennial presence on bestseller lists—this suggests around 35,000 to 70,000 diet books annually. Dividing by 12 months, this yields an estimate of 3,000 to 6,000 new diet books per month globally. That's a lot! I have not read all of them, by far, but I do sample many of them. One book that is touched-on peripherally in many ways, but not specifically, is the carb-fat diet. I'll give you an overview of what it entails.

The foundation of the diet is simple: **Insulin is the culprit.**

All our problems with weight gain are because of insulin. Insulin is the worst thing you can have in your body – except that you can't live without it. Insulin gets glucose into cells so they can survive. It also helps protein synthesis – meaning creating the structure and function of all your cells. People who don't make insulin die – either of ketoacidosis, or starvation both of which happen because glucose cannot get in the cells without it. However, there are many problems associated with too much insulin.

The Dark Side of Insulin Resistance:

Promotion of Fat Storage: Insulin facilitates glucose uptake into cells and promotes the storage of fat, lipogenesis, and inhibits lipolysis (fat breakdown), leading to increased fat accumulation. This creates a vicious cycle where excess fat storage contributes to weight gain. Then obesity further drives insulin resistance, elevating insulin levels and creating more fat. These are the people who say, "I get fat on water!"

Insulin Resistance: Excess insulin causes insulin resistance, where cells become less responsive to insulin signals. To compensate, the pancreas produces more insulin which causes more resistance. Insulin resistance blocks glucose from getting into cells, leading to higher blood glucose levels, which are then stored as fat, contributing to obesity.

Disruption of Appetite Regulation: High insulin levels can interfere with the brain's appetite regulation centers, particularly by affecting leptin signaling (the hormone that signals satiety), which leads to increased hunger and overeating, further promoting weight gain. Insulin also stimulates reward pathways in the brain, increasing cravings for high-calorie, carbohydrate-rich foods.

Impaired Fat Burning: Elevated insulin suppresses the activity of hormone-sensitive lipase, an enzyme responsible for breaking down stored fat. This reduces the body's ability to use fat as an energy source, favoring fat storage over fat burning. We normally use fat to make about 60% of our energy, so this loss is significant.

Increased Visceral Fat Accumulation: Hyperinsulinemia is particularly associated with the accumulation of visceral fat (fat around internal organs), which is metabolically active and linked to higher risks of obesity-related complications like type 2 diabetes, kidney disease, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic syndrome.

Inflammation: Excess insulin can contribute to low-grade systemic inflammation, often seen in obesity. This inflammation exacerbates insulin resistance and promotes further fat storage.

Metabolic Dysfunction: Insulin also disrupts mitochondrial function, reducing energy expenditure and making weight loss more difficult. It actually decreases the production of ATP – the energy of the cell so you have less energy, like running on low batteries.

Hormonal Imbalances: High insulin levels can disrupt other hormones involved in weight regulation, such as cortisol, growth hormone, and sex hormones (e.g., testosterone and estrogen). These imbalances can contribute to fat gain, particularly in specific areas like the abdomen.

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): In women, hyperinsulinemia is a key driver of PCOS, a condition often associated with obesity, infertility, and metabolic syndrome. Insulin resistance in PCOS increases androgen production, which promotes abdominal fat accumulation and weight gain.

Energy Partitioning: Excess insulin shifts energy partitioning toward fat storage rather than muscle growth or energy expenditure. This means that calories consumed are more likely to be stored as fat rather than used for other metabolic processes, giving you less energy.

Muscle Wasting: Resistance to insulin decreases the ability to make new proteins and increase muscle mass.

Impact on Gut Microbiota: Emerging research suggests that hyperinsulinemia may alter gut microbiota composition, favoring bacteria that extract more energy from food, contributing to weight gain, as well as bowel issues like IBS.

Potential Behavioral Effects: Chronically high insulin levels may contribute to fatigue or low energy due to impaired glucose utilization in cells, leading to reduced physical activity and further weight gain. The low energy in the brain contributes to depression, anxiety, and Alzheimer's Disease. Indeed, some researchers have suggested that dementia be called "Diabetes type 3."

What is the answer?

The solution to the problem of insulin has been hotly debated for over a century. Some diets deal with the effects of insulin, but most don't even pay any attention to it. The two primary ways of dealing with insulin resistance through diet are the *ketogenic diet* and the *low-fat vegan diet*.

KETO

The "ketogenic diet" has been used for many years as a weight loss diet. It was first introduced in the 1920's as a treatment for children with epilepsy. The ketones calm the brain and stop seizures. At first, doctors put the children on a fast, which caused them to burn fat and make ketones, stopping the seizures. But you can't fast forever, so a brilliant pediatrician came up with the idea to "trick the body" into thinking it was fasting by giving only fat to eat. It worked!

Since then, the ketogenic diet has been used for weight loss. One of the more popular ketogenic diets came out of the 1970's, the Atkins Diet Revolution, which is still popular today. The idea of a ketogenic diet is that when you don't eat glucose (sugar) you don't produce insulin, so you keep insulin low. This prevents all the problems with insulin noted above. The body burns mostly fat for energy, so the cells don't fill up with glycogen (a storage form of glucose) and become resistant to insulin. Essentially, you are training your metabolism to burn fat for energy. The liver can make fat into ketones which can be used by the brain and other organs, so they don't starve for sugar. Since glucose is a "high-octane" or "hot" fuel, it can cause inflammation, but ketones do not. This is a very effective way to lower glucose, glycogen, and insulin levels. It has a decades-long history of success, but, alas, it is not sustainable. Almost all the studies of this diet show initial weight loss, but long-term failure. One of the many is **Shai et al. (2008) and Meta-Analysis:**

- A 24-month study by Shai and colleagues found that the Atkins diet led to greater weight loss at 6 months compared to a low-fat diet, but by 24 months, weight loss was not significantly different due to lower adherence rates (78% for Atkins vs. 90.4% for low-fat diet).

This supports the idea that the restrictive nature of the Atkins diet makes long-term adherence challenging.

LOW FAT

As noted in the study above, the other option for lowering insulin is a low-fat diet. This may seem counter-intuitive because you can eat all the glucose, starches and sugar you want, but you just avoid fat. This works because fat causes insulin resistance. For about eight hours after eating fat, you are resistant to insulin. Insulin is made, but if you don't eat fat, the level of insulin declines rapidly after a meal, preventing insulin resistance.

An important part of the low-fat diet is exercise. Glucose is taken up by muscles during exercise without the need for insulin. Those who exercise regularly can do well on a low-fat diet. However, there is still the same issue as there is with all very restrictive diets – they are not sustainable long-term for most people.

Solving the Mystery:

Thus, we have a quandary – both diets work well in the short-term, but neither is a good long-term solution for most people.

Enter the carb-fat diet. This is a long-term solution for everyone. Since insulin resistance from eating fat only lasts about eight hours, it could work to have separate low-carb days and low-fat days. On a low-carb day, you could eat fat like meat, fish, eggs, cream cheese, yogurt, nuts, and so forth, but on a low-fat day you would eat beans, rice, oatmeal, bread, fruit and so forth. You could have vegetables on both days that aren't high in either fat or carbs.

What's really good about this diet is that you can choose any day to decide which to do. If you get up in the morning and feel like oatmeal, it could be a low-fat day. If you feel like bacon and eggs, it could be a low-carb day. You could do as many days in a row of either diet, even changing on a monthly basis – or longer!There is no limit on either side. If you are doing a month of low-fat, but you want to go out with the guys for a steak, then make it a low-carb day and have steak with broccoli, asparagus, or brussels sprouts. The change in diet can be for any day.

The limitation in the diet is to avoid mixing fat and carbs. If you eat fat one day, don't eat carbs. If you eat carbs, avoid fat. You would especially avoid anything that is a mixture of fat and carbohydrates like ice cream, pastries, candy, French fries, or any fried foods. The idea is to separate carbs and fats so there is no insulin resistance, keeping insulin down. That way we get the best of both diets, and it is sustainable for life. The only foods we don't eat are those that are high in both fat and carbs.

RULE #1: Do not eat fat and carbs on the same day.

The other great thing about this diet is that you can take advantage of the millions of recipes and websites for both diets. It's easy to find low-fat recipes for any kind of meal you want. There are millions of websites that will give you ideas on low fat meals. On the other hand, there are millions of recipes and websites that promote a ketogenic, or low-carb, diet.

Rule #2: Do not eat anything that says: "Low-Carb," "Keto-friendly," "Low-Fat," or any suchlike on the label. (Avoid almost everything with a label!)

What can I eat?

I'm glad you asked. You can easily look up the carb and fat content of any food and see what you can eat on what day. The idea is to keep the carbs under 20 grams per day on a low-carb day, and the fat under 20 grams per day on a low-fat day. The following is a summary of what the diet looks like. It is divided into four parts:

1) Foods for a Low-Fat day
2) Foods for a Low-Carb day
3) Foods for either day
4) Foods to avoid

Foods for Low-Fat Day

Goal: Low-fat (under 20 grams per day)

- **Grains:**
  Brown rice
  Quinoa
  Oats
  Corn
  Whole wheat/brown rice/lentil pasta with tomato sauce

- **Starchy Veggies:**
  Sweet potatoes
  Mashed/baked potatoes
  Butternut squash

- **Legumes:**
  Lentils
  Chickpeas/hummus
  Beans
  Peas

- **Fruits:**
  Apples
  Berries
  Pears
  Oranges
  Melon

- **Proteins (Low-Fat): (each has about 3g of fat per 3 oz)**
  Chicken breast.
  Turkey breast
  Cod or tilapia

Notes: Cook without added fats (e.g., steam, boil).

Foods for a Low-Carb Day

Goal: Low-carb (<20g total per day)

- **Fats:**
  Olive/Avocado oil
  Coconut oil
  Butter
  Nuts: Almonds, walnuts, macadamias
  Peanut/almond butter

- **Fatty Proteins:**
  Salmon
  Mackerel or sardines
  Chicken/pork
  Beef/Ground beef
  Eggs

- **Dairy:**
  Full-fat Greek yogurt (plain, unsweetened)
  Cheese
  Sour cream
  Cottage Cheese

- **Low-Carb Fruit and Veggies:**
  Avocado
  Olive
  Coconut (unsweetened)

Notes: focus on fat as the main calorie source. Cook with oil. Avoid sauces with sugar or starch (salad dressings, ketchup). Avoid breaded meats or vegetables.

Foods for Either Day

These foods have both low carbohydrate and low fat.

- **Non-Starchy Veggies:**
  Cauliflower/broccoli
  Green beans
  Asparagus
  Bell peppers
  Cucumber
  Mushrooms
  Green salads/sprouts
  Brussels sprouts
  (and so forth)

- **Lean Proteins:**
  Turkey/chicken breast
  White fish (haddock, flounder)
  Tofu

- **Flavorings:**
  Herbs (basil, parsley, cilantro).
  Spices (cumin, paprika, turmeric).
  Vinegar (balsamic, apple cider, no sugar).
  Mustard

- **Beverages:**
  Water
  Black coffee (no cream/sugar).
  Unsweetened tea (green, herbal).

Foods to Never Eat

These foods will stimulate excess insulin and should be avoided.

- **Processed Carbs:**
  White bread
  White rice
  Breakfast cereals
  Instant mashed potatoes

- **Sweet Drinks/Foods:**
  Flavored drinks/soda
  Fruit juice
  Candy/chocolate

- **High-Fat, High-Carb Combos:**
  Pizza
  Pasta with oil/sauce/cheese
  Donuts, pastries, cookies
  French fries (anything fried)
  Ice cream
  Bread/toast with butter
  Potato with oil/butter/sour cream
  Burgers/hot dogs with buns

- **Non-Food Junk:**
  Margarine
  Packaged snacks (no matter what the package says)
  Artificial sweeteners

LOW-CARB DAY MEAL EXAMPLES:

Example Day 1

Breakfast: Scrambled Eggs with Avocado

2 large eggs (1g carbs)
1 tbsp butter (0g carbs)
¼ avocado (2g net carbs, 3g total - 1g fiber)
1 cup brewed black coffee (0g carbs)

Total carbs: ~3g net carbs

Details: Scramble eggs in butter, season with salt and pepper. Slice avocado and serve on the side. Coffee is unsweetened.

Lunch: Cobb Salad (No Dressing Carbs)

2 cups romaine lettuce (1g net carbs, 2g total - 1g fiber)
3 oz grilled chicken breast (0g carbs)
1 hard-boiled egg (0.5g carbs)
1 slice bacon, crumbled (0g carbs)
¼ cup crumbled blue cheese (1g carbs)
2 tbsp olive oil + 1 tbsp red wine vinegar (0g carbs)

Total carbs: ~2.5g net carbs

Details: Toss ingredients together. Use olive oil and vinegar as dressing to avoid hidden carbs in pre-made dressings.

Daily Total for Breakfast + Lunch: ~5.5g net carbs

Note: if you eat dinner, have something light, such as a salad, steamed vegetables, or nuts.

Example Day 2

Breakfast: Greek Yogurt with Chia Seeds

¾ cup full-fat, unsweetened Greek yogurt (5g carbs)
1 tbsp chia seeds (1g net carbs, 6g total - 5g fiber)
5 raspberries (1g net carbs)

Total carbs: ~7g net carbs

Details: Mix chia seeds into yogurt, top with raspberries. Avoid sweetened yogurt or additional toppings like honey.

Lunch: Tuna Lettuce Wraps

4 oz canned tuna in olive oil, drained (0g carbs)
1 tbsp mayonnaise (0g carbs)
2 large romaine lettuce leaves (0.5g net carbs, 1g total - 0.5g fiber)
¼ cucumber, sliced (1g net carbs, 1.5g total - 0.5g fiber)
1 oz cheddar cheese, cubed (0.5g carbs)

Total carbs: ~2g net carbs

Details: Mix tuna with mayo, season with salt and pepper. Spoon into lettuce leaves, add cucumber slices, and serve cheese cubes on the side.

Daily Total for Breakfast + Lunch: ~9g net carbs

Note: If you eat dinner, have something light like a salad, steamed vegetables, or nuts.

Example Day 3

Breakfast: Bacon and Spinach Omelet

2 large eggs (1g carbs)
2 slices bacon, cooked (0g carbs)
½ cup fresh spinach (0.5g net carbs, 1g total - 0.5g fiber)
1 tbsp olive oil (0g carbs)

Total carbs: ~1.5g net carbs

Details: Cook bacon, set aside. Sauté spinach in olive oil, add eggs to make an omelet, and crumble bacon inside.

Lunch: Grilled Salmon with Asparagus

4 oz grilled salmon (0g carbs)
6 asparagus spears (2g net carbs, 3g total - 1g fiber)
1 tbsp butter (0g carbs)
1 cup arugula (0.5g net carbs, 1g total - 0.5g fiber)
1 tbsp lemon juice (1g carbs)

Total carbs: ~3.5g net carbs
Details: Grill or bake salmon, season with salt. Sauté asparagus in butter. Serve with arugula drizzled with lemon juice.

Daily Total for Breakfast + Lunch: ~5g net carbs

Note: if you eat dinner, have something light such as a salad, steamed vegetables, or some nuts.

The reason for not mixing carbs and fat on the same day is to prevent insulin resistance. The diseases that we associate with diabetes, such as Alzheimer's disease, obesity, metabolic syndrome, kidney failure, heart disease, blindness, amputation, and neuropathy are all due to insulin resistance. The problem is not specifically fat, nor is it carbohydrates, the problem is mixing fats with carbohydrates.

It is easy to see how this type of diet is sustainable and healthy. You are not going to have any issues with deficiencies in the diet. There is plenty of room for everything – except junk food! You can satisfy your sweet cravings with fruit on a low-fat day, and have that steak with butter on a low-carb day. Vegetables are available on either day. This could even become a vegan diet for those who don't eat animal products. It works for those who have insulin resistance already. It works for those who want to lose weight. This could be a long-term solution to diet problems.

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Are You Low on Omega-3?

Discover 7 Key Benefits + 4 Mediterranean Recipes to Get More Omega-3 Naturally

FEEL BETTER, THINK SHARPER, AND EAT WELL WITH THESE OMEGA-3-RICH MEDITERRANEAN MEALS.

From brain health to glowing skin, omega-3 fatty acids play a powerful role in how we feel and function every day. But here's the catch: most people aren't getting enough.

These healthy fats are essential—meaning your body can't make them—and falling short can quietly impact your heart, brain, mood, joints, and more. The good news? You don't need expensive supplements or a major lifestyle overhaul. With a few Mediterranean-inspired meals, you can easily nourish your body with the omega-3s it needs.

Let's break it down: why omega-3s matter, how to know if you're getting enough, and 4 delicious Mediterranean recipes to help you boost your intake.

What Exactly Are Omega-3s?

Omega-3s are a type of polyunsaturated fat that support everything from brain cells to blood vessels. They're considered essential because our bodies can't produce them naturally — they have to come from food.

There are 3 main types:

- **ALA (Alpha-linolenic acid):** Found in flaxseeds, chia seeds, walnuts, and plant oils.

EPA (Eicosapentaenoic acid): Found mainly in fatty fish.

- **DHA (Docosahexaenoic acid):** Also in fatty fish, and especially important for brain and eye health.

While your body can convert ALA into EPA and DHA, this process is slow and limited. That's why marine sources (like fish) are so valuable.

7 SCIENCE-BACKED BENEFITS OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Here's what you can expect when you're getting enough omega-3s in your diet:

1. Protects Your Heart
Omega-3s can lower triglycerides, reduce blood pressure, improve cholesterol balance, and prevent plaque buildup in your arteries — all of which reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke.

2. Improves Brain Function and Mood
DHA makes up a major part of your brain's structure. Low levels of omega-3s have been linked to brain fog, depression, and anxiety, while a healthy intake is associated with better memory, focus, and emotional balance.

3. Supports Healthy Development

Omega-3s are critical during pregnancy and early childhood. They play a huge role in fetal brain and eye development — and are linked to higher IQ and better cognitive outcomes in children.

4. Reduces Inflammation
Chronic inflammation is at the root of many health problems, including arthritis, diabetes, and autoimmune diseases. Omega-3s act as anti-inflammatory agents, helping the body stay in balance.

5. Boosts Eye Health
DHA is essential for the structure of the retina. A steady supply of omega-3s helps prevent age-related macular degeneration and may reduce dry eye symptoms.

6. Promotes Healthier Skin and Hair
These fats help regulate oil production, keep skin hydrated, and may even reduce signs of premature aging or eczema.

7. Supports Restful Sleep
Low omega-3 levels have been associated with sleep issues and disturbances. Getting enough may help improve sleep quality and even melatonin production.

How Much Omega-3 Do You Need?

Most health experts recommend:

- **250–500 mg of EPA + DHA** per day for general health
- **1,000 mg** or more daily for people with heart or inflammation concerns
-

You can get this from:

- Fatty fish (like salmon, sardines, and mackerel) — just 2 servings per week covers it
- Plant-based sources like flaxseeds, chia, and walnuts — though keep in mind that the body converts only a small amount to EPA/DHA

4 MEDITERRANEAN RECIPES RICH IN OMEGA-3S

Eating more omega-3s doesn't have to be boring or repetitive. The Mediterranean diet is naturally rich in omega-3s, healthy fats, and anti-inflammatory ingredients. Try these four easy, delicious dishes:

1. Grilled Sardines with Lemon & Herbs

Why it's great: Sardines are a powerhouse source of EPA and DHA — plus they're budget-friendly and sustainable.

Ingredients:

- Fresh sardines (cleaned and gutted)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- Chopped parsley and oregano
- Salt and pepper

Instructions:

1-Mix olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, and herbs.

2-Brush the sardines with the mixture and season.

3-Grill over medium-high heat for 2–3 minutes per side.

4-Serve with lemon wedges and a side salad or grilled veggies.

2. Omega-3 Mediterranean Tabbouleh (with Flax and Walnuts)

Why it's great: Flaxseed and walnuts bring in the ALA, while fresh herbs and olive oil make this salad super refreshing.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cooked quinoa or bulgur
- 1/4 cup chopped walnuts
- 1 tbsp ground flaxseed
- 1 bunch fresh parsley, finely chopped
- 2 tomatoes, diced
- 1/2 cucumber, diced
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Instructions:

1-Combine all ingredients in a bowl.

2-Mix thoroughly and chill for 30 minutes before serving.

3-Garnish with more herbs or a sprinkle of feta if desired.

3. Baked Salmon with Olive Tapenade

Why it's great: Salmon is one of the best sources of omega-3s — paired here with briny olives and healthy olive oil.

Ingredients:

- 2 salmon fillets
- 1/4 cup chopped black and green olives
- 1 tbsp capers
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- Zest of 1 lemon

Instructions:

1-Preheat oven to 375°F (190°C).

2-Place salmon in a baking dish.

3-Mix olives, capers, garlic, olive oil, and zest into a tapenade.

4-Spoon over salmon and bake for 12–15 minutes.

5-Serve with couscous or roasted veggies.

4. Chia & Yogurt Breakfast Bowl with Figs and Walnuts

Why it's great: Chia seeds are a top plant-based source of ALA, while walnuts and Greek yogurt add bonus nutrition.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 3 tbsp chia seeds
- 1/2 cup almond milk
- 1 tbsp honey
- Fresh figs or berries
- Crushed walnuts

Instructions:

1-Stir chia seeds into yogurt and almond milk.

2-Let sit for 2+ hours or overnight to thicken.

3-Top with honey, figs, and walnuts before serving.

Final Takeaway: Nourish Your Body With Omega-3s — Naturally

If you want to support your heart, mind, mood, and more, omega-3s are a must. And thanks to the Mediterranean diet, it's easy to get what you need through real, delicious food.

Quick wins to boost your omega-3s:

-Eat oily fish 2–3 times per week.
-Add chia seeds or flax to smoothies, oatmeal, or yogurt.
-Snack on walnuts.
-Use extra virgin olive oil liberally.
-Try the 4 Mediterranean recipes above!

You don't need to count milligrams or obsess over labels — just eat more whole, nourishing foods. Your brain, heart, and skin will thank you.🔺

Tea vs. Coffee:
Which Morning Brew Best Supports Your Health and Energy?

FROM ENERGY TO CALM FOCUS, HERE'S HOW COFFEE AND TEA COMPARE FOR YOUR WELL-BEING.

Let's be honest—whether you're loyal to coffee or swear by tea, most of us have a strong preference and a favorite mug to match. But when it comes to your health, is one morning beverage truly better than the other? Both offer unique benefits and a few downsides, so let's dive into the science behind each to see how they stack up.

Surprising Similarities Between Coffee and Tea

Despite their differences, both drinks are rich in polyphenols—plant compounds with powerful antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, according to dietitian May Zhu, MBA, RDN. Regular consumption of coffee or tea has been linked to a reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. Their antioxidants and caffeine content may also support brain function and long-term cognitive health.

Coffee's Distinct Advantages

Coffee packs a bigger caffeine punch, which can enhance mental clarity, physical performance, and metabolism. It also contains chlorogenic acids, a group of antioxidants shown to benefit brain and liver health. These compounds are more prevalent in coffee and often more bioavailable—easier for the body to absorb—than some found in tea.

Why Tea Might Be the Better Choice for Calm Focus

Tea contains L-theanine, an amino acid especially found in green and white teas that promotes calm alertness and reduces stress. Herbal teas offer additional benefits like digestive support and relaxation—and they're naturally caffeine-free, making them a great option for people looking to limit stimulants.

Absorption and Antioxidant Impact

Tea's most potent antioxidant, EGCG (epigallocatechin gallate), can be sensitive to heat and pH, making it harder to absorb. Meanwhile, coffee's chlorogenic acids are typically more stable and bioavailable. To boost antioxidant absorption from either beverage, Zhu recommends pairing them with food or a small amount of fat.

The Caffeine Factor

Caffeine affects everyone differently. While it can elevate mood and focus in moderate amounts, too much may cause anxiety, digestive issues, or sleep disruption. The FDA suggests up to 400 mg daily is safe for most adults. A cup of coffee contains about 95 mg of caffeine, while tea ranges from 30 to 50 mg. Even so, stronger teas like black or matcha can still cause jitters—though L-theanine helps buffer that effect, offering a more stable energy boost.

Potential Downsides of Overdoing Either Drink

Overconsuming coffee or tea—especially concentrated versions—can lead to sleep issues, rapid heartbeat, or digestive discomfort. Coffee's acidity may irritate sensitive stomachs, while overly strong teas (like detox blends) can impact liver or kidney health and interact with medications. As Zhu advises, moderation is key.

Final Verdict: It Depends on You

There's no universal winner. Coffee might be better for energy and metabolism, while tea offers stress relief and hydration. The best choice depends on your goals, caffeine sensitivity, and taste preferences. Both drinks can fit into a healthy lifestyle—as long as you watch what you add (like sugar or cream) and avoid late-day caffeine if you're sensitive to it. And if you're pregnant, breastfeeding, or managing a health condition, consult your healthcare provider about what's right for you. ▲

5 Alarming Ways

Ultra-Processed Foods Spike Your Blood Sugar — And What You Can Do About It

PROCESSED FOODS CAN MESS WITH YOUR BLOOD SUGAR IN SNEAKY WAYS—BUT SMALL, SMART FOOD SWAPS CAN MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE.

In recent years, ultra-processed foods have taken over grocery store shelves and household pantries. From sugary cereals and soda to frozen meals and packaged snacks, these products dominate many people's daily diets. But what's often overlooked is how these foods affect our blood sugar levels—and, in the long run, our overall health.

High blood sugar might not seem like an immediate concern, especially if you're not living with diabetes. But chronically elevated blood sugar can quietly cause damage over time, increasing the risk of insulin resistance, fatigue, weight gain, and even cardiovascular problems. And ultra-processed foods are a major driver behind these silent shifts in our metabolic health.

In this article, we'll explore five major ways ultra-processed foods contribute to high blood sugar—and give you some practical tips on how to protect yourself without giving up convenience or flavor.

1. They Cause Sudden Spikes in Blood Sugar

Ultra-processed foods are typically high in refined carbohydrates—think white flour, corn syrup, and maltodextrin. These ingredients digest quickly, causing a rapid release of glucose into your bloodstream. This is often followed by a spike in insulin, the hormone responsible for moving glucose out of the blood and into your cells.

Over time, repeated blood sugar spikes and crashes can wear down your body's ability to regulate sugar effectively. This is how insulin sensitivity begins to decline, setting the stage for consistently high blood sugar levels—even if you're not consuming massive amounts of sugar all at once.

Did you know? A study published in The BMJ found that for every 10% increase in the proportion of ultra-processed foods in a person's diet, there was a corresponding increase in the risk of metabolic dysfunction, including higher fasting glucose levels.

2. They Promote Overeating and Weight Gain

One of the sneakiest things about ultra-processed foods is how easy they are to overeat. Their combination of salt, sugar, fat, and artificial flavors is engineered to stimulate the brain's reward system. You're not just eating to fuel your body—you're eating because it tastes so good you can't stop.

This leads to excess calorie intake, often without realizing it. And since these foods are nutrient-poor but energy-dense, the result is often weight gain. Excess body fat, particularly around the abdomen, makes it harder for insulin to do its job, increasing the likelihood of persistently elevated blood sugar.

Quick tip: Pay attention to satiety. Whole foods like legumes, whole grains, and vegetables take longer to digest and help you feel full longer—without the crash.

3. They Lack Fiber, a Key Tool in Blood Sugar Control

Dietary fiber is one of your body's best natural defenses against blood sugar spikes. Soluble fiber, in particular, slows the absorption of sugar into the bloodstream and helps maintain a more stable glucose response after meals.

Unfortunately, fiber is often stripped out of ultra-processed foods during manufacturing. Instead of whole grains, many processed foods use refined flours that have had the bran and germ removed—along with most of the fiber and nutrients.

Simple fix: Add more fiber-rich foods to your plate—like oats, lentils, chia seeds, or leafy greens. Even just one high-fiber food per meal can make a big difference.

4. They Disrupt the Gut Microbiome

Your gut microbiome—a diverse community of bacteria living in your intestines—plays a surprising role in regulating blood sugar and metabolic health. A balanced microbiome supports proper digestion, nutrient absorption, immune function, and yes, blood sugar regulation.

Many ultra-processed foods contain additives like emulsifiers, artificial sweeteners, and preservatives that can disrupt this delicate microbial ecosystem. An imbalanced gut microbiome (called dysbiosis) has been linked to increased inflammation, insulin resistance, and higher blood sugar levels.

Research spotlight:

Some studies have found that emulsifiers—common in products like ice cream and packaged sauces—can thin the protective mucus lining of the gut and alter bacterial populations in ways that negatively affect metabolism.

5. They Fuel Chronic Inflammation

Inflammation is your body's natural response to injury or infection, but when it becomes chronic—thanks to poor diet, stress, or lack of sleep—it can wreak havoc on your metabolism. Ultra-processed foods often contain pro-inflammatory ingredients like trans fats, excessive omega-6 fatty acids, and high levels of sodium and sugar.

This type of inflammation can impair how your body uses insulin, making it harder to control blood sugar. It can also damage the cells of the pancreas that produce insulin, further compounding the issue.

What you can do: Incorporate more anti-inflammatory foods like berries, olive oil, fatty fish (like salmon), turmeric, and green leafy vegetables into your meals.

Conclusion: The Power of Small Shifts

While completely cutting out ultra-processed foods might not be realistic for most people, even small changes can help protect your blood sugar and overall metabolic health. Start by reading ingredient labels, cooking more at home, and choosing whole or minimally processed foods when you can.

Swap sugary snacks for fruit and nuts. Trade soda for sparkling water with a splash of citrus. Replace refined grains with whole grains like quinoa or brown rice. These little choices, when made consistently, can have a major impact.

By staying aware of what you're putting in your body—and how it affects your blood sugar—you're taking a powerful step toward better energy, a healthier weight, and long-term well-being. ▲