

DIABETES: PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

In many developing countries (but not only, it is happening almost everywhere on the planet), there is nowadays a continuous increase in diabetes cases. The disease is prevalent in all age groups, although the highest incidence is among those over fifty. The environmental factors that have the greatest impact are obesity and lack of physical activity.

DIABETES IS A DISEASE CHARACTERIZED BY HIGH BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS (HIGH GLYCEMIA), OFTEN ASSOCIATED WITH OVERWEIGHT OR OBESITY, HYPERTENSION (HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE) AND HIGH LEVELS OF CHOLESTEROL.

A healthy lifestyle allows achieving blood sugar levels that ensure the proper functioning of our body and prevent potential long-term health damage. With a well-controlled diabetes, a completely normal life is still always possible. People with diabetes can work, engage in sports activities and don't have limitations in choosing their leisure activities.

The golden rules are:

1. Maintain a normal weight.
2. Follow a healthy diet rich in vegetables and fruits.
3. Exercise regularly.

The manifestations of diabetes are a consequence of an excess of glucose (high blood sugar). The most important symptoms may include :

FREQUENT URINATION,

FATIGUE,

INCREASED THIRST,

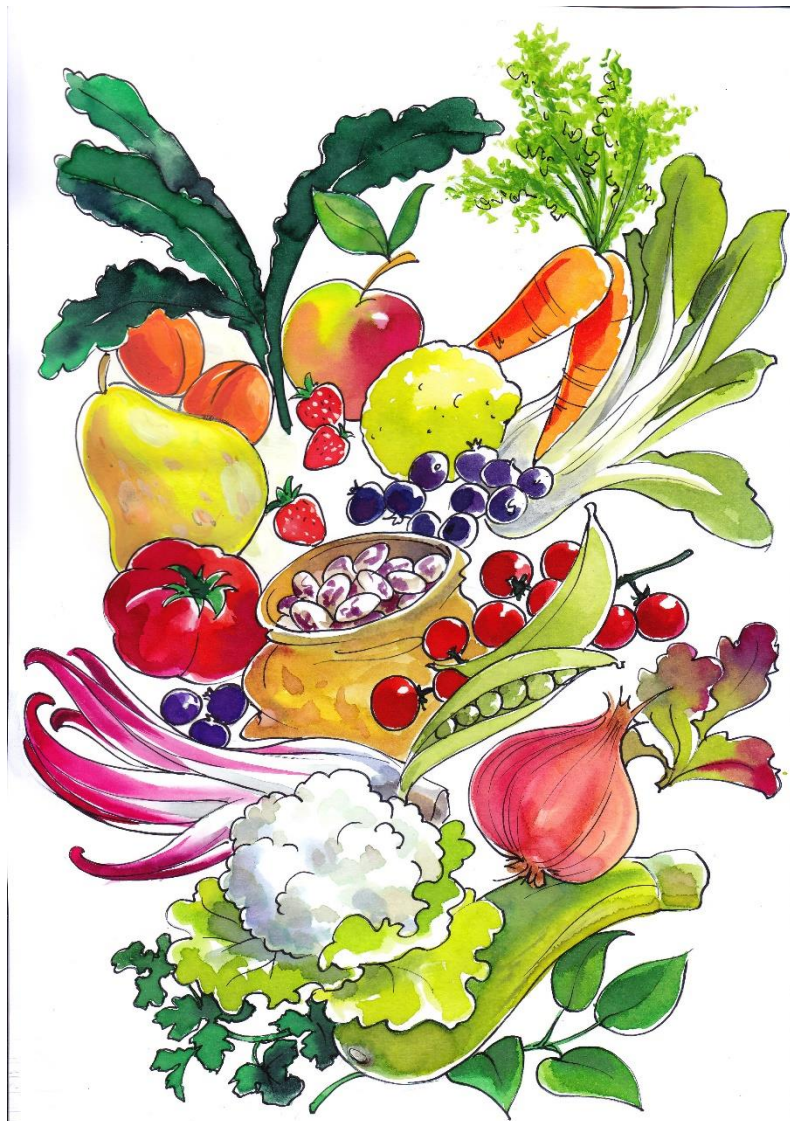
WEIGHT LOSS

AND VISION DISTURBANCES.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE TO PREVENT DIABETES AND AVOID ITS WORSENING WHEN DIAGNOSED?

Avoid simple sugars (sweets, sugar, honey). Consume complex sugars (= carbohydrates) in moderation: pasta, bread, rice, potatoes, couscous, and whole grains.

Legumes and whole grains are beneficial; they slow down the absorption of sugars and fats, protecting the heart and blood vessels. Avoid animal fats (butter, lard); limit processed meats and cheeses. It is better to eat fish and olive oil, soy, corn, and sunflower oil, which protect the arteries. Rediscover vegetables (lettuce, tomatoes, peppers...), to be consumed freely. The same goes for vegetable broth, spices, and herbs.



PLEASE NOTE: There is no need to buy “diabetic foods”, which are not better than a balanced diet for controlling blood sugar. In fact, these “diabetic foods” or beverages should be avoided because they often contain fructose instead of glucose, which is harmful to diabetics!

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Physical activity is beneficial for everyone, but it holds a special importance in preventing diabetes, as it has many beneficial effects on our defences against this disease.

MYTHS TO DISPEL

- The only fruit allowed for diabetics is the apple, preferably green. → FALSE: Different varieties of apples have a very similar and comparable sugar content to pears or oranges.
- Eliminate bread and pasta. → FALSE: Sugars in these and other starches are the ideal fuel for the human body, and it is dangerous to eliminate them. Just pay attention to the quantities (after a hearty pasta dish, avoid adding a large sandwich).
- Rice is preferable to pasta. → FALSE: In terms of weight, the calorie content is identical, but the carbohydrates in rice are absorbed more quickly, resulting in a greater increase in blood sugar.
- Crackers, breadsticks, and toast should replace bread. → FALSE: These starches, having less water content, are richer in sugars (often also in fats) and should therefore be consumed in smaller quantities.
- Use honey or cane sugar instead of sugar. → FALSE: These products contain the same amounts of sugars.
- Seed oil is lighter than olive oil. → FALSE: All oils contain the same amount of fats and calories; only the taste differs.
- Raw oil has fewer calories than cooked oil. → FALSE: The calories remain the same; other characteristics change.
- Wine and alcohol are forbidden. → TRUE and FALSE: On an empty stomach, they can cause severe hypoglycaemic crises. Generally, no more than one glass of wine per meal is allowed. It is also important to calculate the calories they provide.
- Ice cream is forbidden. → FALSE: Well-compensated diabetics can eat it, provided they consider the calories consumed. It is important to monitor blood sugar in the following hours.
- "Diabetic products" do not contain sugars and can be consumed freely. → FALSE: They almost always contain a good quantity of sugars and are overall very energy intensive.

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