



The Science Behind Oatmeal & Diabetes

With reference to Michael Greger M.D. FACLM on July 14, 2026



Before Insulin, There Was Oatmeal

Before the discovery of insulin, the lives of many people with diabetes were saved or prolonged by Carl von Noorden's oatmeal diet. As I discuss in my video *Is Oatmeal Good for People with Diabetes?*, he published his findings in 1903, which were received with a great deal of skepticism. But the critics were overcome in the following years by the weight of evidence.

Acclaimed doctor James B. Herrick began to try the oatmeal diet on his patients. Initially very doubtful, he became astonished by the results, which led to the 1909 proclamation that no case of juvenile or adolescent diabetes should be deprived of the benefits of the oatmeal cure.

The great Elliott Joslin, founder of the oldest and largest diabetes clinic in the world, described the effects of oatmeal as "sometimes magical," calling the oatmeal cure an unsolved mystery, referred to back then as "one of the greatest puzzles in diabetes." They did have some clues, though. They found that animal protein had to be strictly excluded, as it annihilates the favorable action of oatmeal-type diets.

And now we know, more than a century later, that, indeed, animal protein intake intensifies insulin resistance, which is the cause of prediabetes and type 2 diabetes, whereas plant-based foods enhance insulin sensitivity, which is the opposite.

Is Oatmeal Good for People with Diabetes?

We've long known that higher consumption of whole grains, including oats, is associated with a lower risk of diabetes. More than a dozen randomized controlled trials found that oats significantly improved both short-term and long-term blood sugar control, in addition to lowering cholesterol levels.

We think the benefits arise from a fermentable fiber in oats called beta-glucan. We know one of the underlying cholesterol-lowering mechanisms of oatmeal consumption might be its microbiome-manipulating ability—in other words, having a beneficial effect on our intestinal bacteria.

What's So Great About the Fiber in Oatmeal?

A little fiber goes a long way. Our good gut flora uses fiber to make short-chain fatty acids that have anti-inflammatory effects. There are dozens of randomized controlled trials showing the types of fiber found in oats and beans can improve long-

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Is Sorghum a Healthy Grain?

nutritionfacts.org February 13, 2025

Sorghum, especially red and black varieties, has high antioxidant levels, comparable to some fruits and vegetables, which may benefit chronic disease prevention.

Animal studies show sorghum extracts may slow tumor growth and prevent metastasis, though these findings need confirmation in human studies.

Sorghum is gluten-free, making it a suitable grain for people with celiac disease, and its fiber content may aid overall digestive health.

Treat Type 1 Diabetes with a Plant-Based Diet?

nutritionfacts.org October 22, 2024

A patient avoided further heart issues, controlled cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugars, and lost weight by adopting a whole food, plant-based diet, transforming his health outlook significantly.

Unlike type 2 diabetes, type 1 diabetes, which is typically considered to be irreversible, shows promising responses to early dietary interventions focused on whole plant foods, potentially halting autoimmune destruction of insulin-producing cells.

Research emphasises that increasing whole plant foods can improve blood sugar control in type 1 diabetes, challenging misconceptions about fruit intake and its impact on blood sugar levels.

Drinking Water, Losing Weight

nutritionfacts.org November 7, 2024

Consuming two cups of water can increase noradrenaline levels, boosting metabolic rate by up to 30 percent within an hour, and potentially accelerating weight loss by 44 percent.

The metabolic boost from drinking water may be nullified by beta-blocker drugs, which block the beta receptors that noradrenaline would typically activate.



term blood sugar control in people with diabetes. Why? Because the gut bacteria selectively promoted by dietary fiber intake can help alleviate type 2 diabetes.

The oat fiber itself has been shown to act as a prebiotic, boosting the growth of beneficial bacteria like Lactobacillus and Bifidobacteria. So, between the lack of animal protein, lack of animal fat, and bursting at the seams with prebiotic fiber, it's no wonder that oatmeal diets grew to become part of the clinical routine in the treatment of diabetes.

How Soon Can You See Results?

Several studies have suggested that a few days of eating oatmeal could have beneficial effects for about a month afterward. In a randomized, controlled, crossover trial, not only did insulin needs drop by about 40% in just two days, compared to just restricting calories alone with a hypocaloric diabetic diet, but a measure of long-term blood sugar control taken four weeks later reflected the benefit.

Other new studies have shown the same thing. Two days of oatmeal significantly reduced the required amount of insulin and improved blood sugar levels, with beneficial effects noted for up to four weeks. Consider this: Patients with uncontrolled type 2 diabetes on the two-day oatmeal diet experienced a 40% reduction of insulin dose, accompanied by almost normalization of average blood sugars. Although the intervention only lasted for two days, researchers observed a lasting significant reduction of insulin dosage and ameliorated mean blood sugars for weeks after the participants were dismissed from the study—and that was after they resumed their regular diets.

Put people on a diet packed with oats, beans, fruits, vegetables, and nuts, and the number of their gut fiber-feeders churning out beneficial short-chain fatty acids shoots up, and fasting diabetic blood sugars drop by about 25% within one month. The more fiber-feeders they fostered, the better their blood sugar control. When the fiber-promoted short-chain fatty acid producers were present in greater diversity and abundance, participants had better improvement in their hemoglobin A1c levels (which is a measure of longer-term blood sugar control).

Are There Any Downsides to Oatmeal?

If you try an oatmeal diet, your physician should be ready to rapidly deprescribe your blood sugar drugs or else you could become dangerously overmedicated. Oatmeal interventions should not be performed in patients who might have difficulties in reporting symptoms of low blood sugar. The downside of trying oatmeal days is that it may work a little too well, so it must be done under close medical supervision.



Baked Carrot Cake Oatmeal



Ingredients:

1 c	rolled oats	1½ t	ground cinnamon
2 T	ground chia seeds	1½ c	unsweetened soy milk
2 T	ground flaxseeds	½ c	Date Syrup
1 c	grated carrot	1 t	pure vanilla extract
¼ c	chopped pecans or walnuts		

Method:

Preheat the oven to 190°C. **Line** an 8-inch square baking pan with parchment paper, and **set** aside.

In a bowl, **combine** the oats, chia seeds, flaxseeds, carrot, nuts, and cinnamon, and **stir** until well-mixed. **Add** the soy milk, date syrup, and vanilla, then **stir** until well-combined.

Transfer the oatmeal mixture to the prepared baking pan, and **smooth** it evenly.

Bake for about 30 minutes, or until the oatmeal is golden brown and has set. **Remove** the baking pan from the oven, and let it cool for 10 to 15 minutes before serving.

