

SUGAR FREE FOODS: A BAD CHOICE FOR WEIGHT LOSS

**BY TERESA SIEVERS MD, MSMS, FAARM & KAREN CALLAN BA, CHHC,
AADP EDITED BY ANNIE LISA**

Is Insulin resistance keeping you fat?

Insulin resistance (IR) is a phenomenon where your body may be making enough insulin, but your body is not responding to the insulin you are secreting. Because of this, your body keeps making more insulin. And although it may not lower your blood sugar as well as it should, it is also signaling your body to store fat. This is what causes the “belly fat” you cannot seem to diet or exercise away.

STEP INTO THE SPOTLIGHT WITH DR SIEVERS AND COACH KAREN

Q: Dear Dr. Sievers and Coach Karen, I have been trying to lose the same 30 pounds for the last 10 years. I recently had blood work done and my fasting blood sugar was 99. My doctor was not concerned as this is in the range of normal. I try to keep a healthy diet and eat a lot of sugar free foods containing artificial sweeteners. However I can't ever seem to lose more than 5-10 pounds. And if I go off my diet at all, I gain it right back. Can you offer some advice?

A: Absolutely! While your fasting blood sugar is within the acceptable range, it is on the high end of the spectrum and can not only be affecting your weight, but increases your risk of diabetes. Studies show that for every one point you are above 85, your risk of developing diabetes goes up 6%. But even without developing diabetes, high blood sugar puts you at risk for complications such as weight gain, cancer and dementia, just to name a few.

The first thing is to get off your “sugar free” foods. “Sugar Free” is just clever marketing! People think that it helps you lose weight, but it doesn't. In fact it may contribute to your weight gain. Let's take diet soda for example. It may have no calories, but the sugar substitute makes the body think it is getting sugar, often times making you release insulin and thus store fat – not to mention it is loaded with sodium. On average, people who drink diet soda daily and then stop will lose 5 pounds in 6 weeks with no other changes.

The concept of “calories in equals calories out” is another problem when IR people are trying to lose weight. We have had many patients who have tried commercial weight loss programs. And although they lost some weight, have worsening sugar control and ultimately gain all of the weight back, sometimes more. That is why we focus on nutrient content of food in conjunction with the glycemic index. This means that we focus on foods that raise blood sugar slowly and not as high as other foods. As a result the amount of insulin the body releases at one time is decreased and has less impact on fat storage.

But maintaining a healthy glycemic index sometimes is not enough. Supplements can be effective as another avenue to help reverse insulin resistance. For instance, chromium is often

deficient in those with IR and very difficult to obtain in your diet. Typically people are low in chromium when they have eaten a high glycemic diet over many years. Chromium is essential to allow insulin to bring glucose (sugar) into the cell. Another supplement that has been beneficial in aiding sugar control and thus weight loss is Alpha Lipoic Acid. The problem is people are often not taking enough of it or they are taking immediate release so it is not present long enough during the day to work. Even Vitamin D3 has been shown to help insulin work better. There are other even more basic nutrients that insulin needs such as zinc and magnesium. We offer nutritional testing that can assess your nutrient deficiencies.

Of course, we cannot forget exercise's role in weight loss. Often when you ask people who have difficulty losing weight about their exercise, the response is that they walk. They have been doing the same thing for years and are not getting results. A better choice is resistance training, which is imperative in order to build muscle. The more muscle mass you have, the more insulin sensitive your body is.

We have a program that is specifically designed to deal with and reverse insulin resistance. It is by far one of the most sought after programs that we have. Patients meet with me where I assess their degree of IR, their nutrient deficiencies, thyroid function and other hormone levels. For instance, low estrogen levels increase IR. Patients then meet with Coach Karen weekly for 12 weeks. Coach Karen tailors individualized meal plans for each patient based on their dietary preferences, lifestyle and any possible food allergies or intolerances. When people are embarking on a weight loss program they are often looking for the "right time," after a birthday or vacation. Coach Karen has tailored programs for patients even while vacationing on a cruise.

The goal of our program has three basic components to reverse insulin resistance: a low glycemic diet, exercise and supplements. When these three modalities are combined, lowering the glycemic index can be achieved.

Teresa A. Sievers, MD
Restorative Health & Healing Center
10201 Arcos Av., Suite 201, Estero
Learn more about Dr. Sievers at:
www.rhhcenter.com

Karen R. Callan, CHC, AADP
Certified Health Coach
10201 Arcos Ave., Suite 201 Estero
239-405-9169
Learn More About BEST BODY NOW at:
www.loveybestbodynow.com