Exercise after You Eat: Hitting the Postprandial Glucose Target

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Abstract

We discuss a novel hypothesis: the effect size of postmeal exercise for attenuating postprandial glucose will be a function of the exercise bout vs. the size of the postprandial glucose response, specifically peak and duration of the postprandial glucose excursion.

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MAIN

Taking a walk after eating can help with blood sugar control

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By Ask the Doctors

3 min read

When it comes to exercise, a group of researchers recently uncovered surprising news. They selected seven studies that looked at how sitting, standing and walking affect the body. In five of the studies, the participants had normal blood sugar. In two, they had either prediabetes or Type 2 diabetes. Among the metrics the researchers examined were changes in blood levels of glucose and insulin.

The data showed that even a five-minute walk after eating a meal had a measurable effect on moderating blood sugar levels. The beneficial effect of walking was observed during a 60- to 90-minute window following the meal. For people who took a walk during that time, changes to blood sugar were not only less extreme, but also occurred more gradually. That's important because sudden blood sugar spikes and drops can raise cardiovascular risk and are believed to play a role in developing Type 2 diabetes.

This positive effect on blood sugar occurred in all the participants who took a post-meal walk, regardless of their diabetes status. Standing after eating also had a beneficial effect, but it was far more modest.

You are fortunate that your annual physical provided a warning about your Type 2 diabetes risk. Prediabetes is a silent condition, which means it produces no symptoms. It is important that you follow through with changes to diet and increased exercise. And as research suggests, even short walks after eating can help improve blood sugar control.