Diet soda and insulin spikes [1]

Dear Alice,

I have heard that the main reason why a diet drink, like diet soda, can be bad on a diet, is that it can spike insulin levels and then your body expects sugar that it does not get. I have taken to the habit of only occasionally having diet drinks with meals, so that any increase in insulin is actually met with food in my system. My question is whether or not this is a good/workable strategy, or whether a diet soda is a diet soda no matter when you drink it and is therefore always a bad idea. Thank you for your time.

Answer

Dear Reader,

It appears that the jury is out on the influence of artificial sweeteners on the body’s blood sugar and insulin response. While some studies (primarily on animals) have pointed to a link between sweeteners and insulin spikes, others have failed to find such a link. More research needs to be done in order to come up with more conclusive information.

It is important to note that there are multiple types of artificial sweeteners, including aspartame (NutraSweet, Equal) [2], saccharin (Sweet’n Low), sucralose (Splenda) [3], and Acesulfame potassium (Sunett). Each of these sweet substitutes is chemically unique. While some may be sweet and induce a slight insulin response, others may be bitter and affect other parts of the body. Therefore, more research needs to be done to determine the effects of each brand of sweetener on the body. Back to the lab bench!

Unfortunately, it is unlikely that there is a single winning method for all people trying to avoid insulin spikes. It is important that you find the right sweetener that works for you. For example, if you test your blood sugar and find that you do not have a response to artificial sweeteners, or that consuming these substances with a meal mitigates insulin spikes, then you may be able to continue this habit. If you are concerned about your insulin and blood sugar levels, it is recommended to speak with a health care provider. Columbia students can make an appointment to see a health care provider by calling Medical Services [4] at x4-2284 or by logging in to Open Communicator [5].

Stay sweet & healthy!

Alice!

Category:
Related questions

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Diet sodas and drinking calories [9]
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