

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S
Herbal Legacy Newsletter

Carrot Stick Diplomacy

by David Christopher, M.H.

When I recommend drinking carrot juice on a daily bases, or even just eating carrots, I am still asked "But, David, what about the high sugar content of carrots?" Ever since the South Beach Diet emphasized the Glycemic Index, people have developed a phobia for some very beneficial foods, like carrots. Currently, carrots are classified as "low" on the Glycemic Index, scoring 39 - for cooked and 45 - for juiced (The scale is 0=water to 100=glucose). Other foods at the same level are polished white rice, macaroni, and a Snickers bar! In fact table sugar is only 20 points higher at 65. Needless to say, the Glycemic Index can be confusing. The Glycemic Index can be a useful tool, but only if we keep in mind the true nature of food.

Glucose is not a nasty word and we should not shun it. Glucose is the fuel that runs every cell of our bodies. Whole, fresh foods that are high in glucose are foods we should use for immediate energy needs. Highly processed foods with high or added glucose should be avoided (these are classified as High Glycemic Load foods). These highly processed foods are digested far too quickly and trigger an insulin release from the pancreas; which is just doing its job by protecting the body from high blood sugar levels. This quick response, for many people, creates an overshoot in the production of insulin and the body is left with a deficiency of glucose. When glucose levels crash, hunger is stimulated especially for starchy or sugary foods. If the person satisfies this crash with the same processed foods that caused the problem, a vicious cycle of feast or famine is created and this leads to stress on the beta cells of the pancreas, resulting in insulin resistance and eventually Type II diabetes. There is no evidence that the naturally occurring sugars, in fresh whole fruits and vegetables, has any adverse effects on the body.

Another related question that I often respond to is "Which is worse glucose or fructose?" Again, in their whole, fresh, natural states, as fresh fruits and vegetables, neither is a problem. They are both beneficial, glucose for immediate use and fructose for later use. Fructose cannot be used by the cells until converted to glucose by the liver. Fructose is used by diabetics because it doesn't raise blood sugar. However, if enough is consumed, as with the highly processed (manufactured) high fructose corn syrup, it overwhelms the liver and the excess is converted to fat.

Artificial Sweeteners should never be used. These substances trick the body into responding to an energy source with no energy available. So in response to a perceived intake of glucose the pancreas secretes insulin. High insulin levels stimulate the production of fat cells. High insulin levels also stimulate the liver to convert glycogen (stored, chained glucose) to glucose, again raising blood sugar, and again overworking the pancreas. The only safe and usable sugars are in fresh, whole, live foods.

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