

November is Diabetes Awareness Month!

Diabetes is a condition in which your body cannot properly use and store food for energy. Glucose, a form of sugar, is the fuel your body needs. Glucose comes from many foods such as sweet foods, fruit, milk, some vegetable and starchy foods.

It is important for people who have diabetes to stay healthy and take care of themselves. Both type 1 and type 2 diabetes are serious conditions and can lead to complications. There are many things people with diabetes can do to stay well. One of the most important steps to help stay healthy is eating well.

An important part of eating well includes eating high fibre foods. Eating more fibre foods may help you feel fuller longer and help you eat healthy portions. Fibre may also help to improve your blood glucose levels and improve your cholesterol. Studies have shown that flax can lower blood sugar levels in healthy young adults and post-menopausal women with high cholesterol.

Flax also has a low glycemic index (GI). GI is a scale that is used to evaluate how much a food will raise your blood sugar levels. It is best to eat foods with a low GI, in other words, those that increase the blood sugar a small amount and gradually over time. Flax is low in carbohydrate and therefore has a low GI. Eating foods with a low GI may help to control your blood sugar levels, lower LDL cholesterol (low density lipoprotein, also known as the 'bad' cholesterol) levels and control your appetite.

Flax has a very unique nutritional composition. Its composition is insoluble and soluble fibre, protein, lignans (phytoestrogens) and healthy fats make it a tough functional food to beat!

The fibre content in flax is approximately one third soluble and two thirds insoluble. Soluble fibre mixes with water and forms a mucilage or gel in the gut. It's well known for its ability to lower the bad cholesterol, control blood sugar levels and delay stomach emptying (which gives a feeling of being full longer). Insoluble fibre acts to help to prevent constipation and keep your bowels and digestive system healthy. Flax is therefore an ideal food to help people who have diabetes.

Staying healthy with diabetes is a full time job. Adding 1-2 Tbsp of ground flax to your daily meal plan is a smart decision. Flax is primed to help control your blood sugar levels but that's not all it's capable of. With the prevalence of diabetes related complications on the rise, why not incorporate flax into every meal? It can help prevent diabetes in your residents and help control diabetes in residents that have diabetes.

Nutrition Facts (2 Tbsp = 15 gram FlaxFlour)

Calories (kcal) 70	Cholesterol 0 mg
Total Fat 6.0 g	Sodium 0 mg
Saturated 0.5 g	Potassium 125 mg
Trans 0.0 g	Total Carbohydrate
Polyunsaturated 4.0 g	Dietary Fibre 4.0 g Soluble Fibre 1 g Insoluble Fibre 3 g
Omega-6 0.9 g	Sugars 0 g
Omega-3 3.0 g	Protein 3.0 g

LowGI (55 or less) * † Choose most often	MediumGI (56-69) * † Choose more often	HighGI (70 or more) * † Choose less often
<p>Breads: 100% stone ground whole wheat Heavy mixed grain Pumpernickel</p> <p>Cereal: All Bran™ Bran Buds with Psyllium™ Oat Bran™</p> <p>Grains: Barley Bulgar Pasta/noodles Parboiled or converted rice</p> <p>Other: Milled Flax Seeds Sweet potato Yam Legumes Lentils Chickpeas Kidney beans Split peas Soy beans Baked beans</p>	<p>Breads: Whole wheat Rye Pita</p> <p>Cereal: Grapenuts™ Puffed wheat Oatmeal Quick oats</p> <p>Grains: Basmati rice Brown rice Couscous</p> <p>Other: Potato, new/white Sweet corn Popcorn Stoned Wheat Thins™ Ryvita™ (rye crisps) Black bean soup Green pea soup</p>	<p>Breads: White bread Kaiser roll Bagel, white</p> <p>Cereal: Bran flakes Corn flakes Rice Krispies™</p> <p>Grains: Short-grain rice</p> <p>Other: Potato, baking (Russet)</p>

*expressed as a percentage of the value for glucose † Canadian values where available

Adapted with permission from: Foster-Powell K, Holt SHA, Brand-Miller JC. International table of glycemic index and glycemic load values Am J Clin Nutr. 2002;76:5-76

References:

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- Notes about Flax and Recipes for using FlaxFlour, Valley FlaxFlour Ltd. www.flaxflour.ca
- Flax Council of Canada website. www.flaxcouncil.ca
- Flax – A Health and Nutrition Primer, 4th edition, 2007 Flax Council of Canada
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- Facts on Soluble Fibre, Niagara Regional Dietitians Handout - Heart Healthy Committee, Jan. 2008.