Should a Diabetic be a Starchivore?

Carnivores eat meat. Herbivores eat plants. Omnivores eat both. Starchivores, anyone?

Simply put, Starchivores are starch eaters. That's right, starchivores are people who consume a diet rich in carbohydrates like potatoes, rice, bread, pasta, cereals and grains.

Studies have shown that whole-foods, high-carb, plant-based eaters enjoy higher levels of energy, fiber content and the feeling of being full (satiety). This can help with weight loss.

But why are we starchivores in the first place? There are two schools of thought here: Evolution and Creation. For several years, "The Diet Wars" between low carb and high carb supporters dating back to the 70s and 80s have been raging, trying to convince the audience of its separate validity.

Recently, theories supporting evolution state that Neanderthals and ancient human mouth fossils containing residue of starch-rich foods as far back as 100, 000 years were recently discovered. Feeding on this diet likely helped expand the human brain because of the glucose (sugar) found in starch long before farming began.

On the other hand, those who believe in the creation story trace Man's 'starchivorous' nature to the Biblical statement, "…and to everything moving upon the earth in which there is life, I have given all "green vegetation for food."

Therefore, regardless of which group you belong to, the fact remains the same- that man was originally a starchivore from the beginning.

But the million-dollar question remains, "Should a diabetic eat starch?"

Now, there's normal starch, and then there's resistant starch. And since starch contains glucose which converts into sugar, it's all bad news for the diabetic, right? Well, not quite.

Turns out that resistant starch is highly beneficial to people with diabetes because it controls their blood glucose levels. Resistant starch does not get digested as opposed to regular starch found in most carbs. So it skips the small intestine and finds its way to the large one where it acts like "soluble fiber." This process dodges the whole breaking-down-carbs-into-glucose part of the digestive procedure.

In the large intestine, it gets fermented by bacteria and forms short-chain fatty acids. Guess what- these acids are not only responsible for promoting colon health and preventing colon cancer, but they're also in charge of improving insulin sensitivity, lowering both blood sugar and cholesterol levels while boosting the immune system along the way! Way to go, resistant starch!

After some study subjects replaced their regular carbohydrate intake with resistant starch, they reported 20% - 30% higher fat burning; that is, the short-chain fatty acids blocked their bodies' ability to use carbohydrates as fuel, so they started burning fat instead. Therefore, say hello to safe weight loss!

So, where do you get this precious resistant starch? It may not be too far off from your refrigerator. Think legumes like beans, dried peas and lentils, whole grains such as oats, brown rice, corn, wheat, slightly green bananas, and fibrous roots like yams and potatoes.

Interestingly, cooking and then cooling certain starchy foods can increase their resistant starch content in a process called gelatinization. You can do this with rice, potato, and pasta.

Moderation is vital in everything, so to enjoy the healthy benefits of resistant starch, aim to double the roughly 4 grams typically being consumed in the U.S. One tablespoon of raw potato starch can give you 8 grams which you can use by sprinkling on food or mixing in water or smoothies. Otherwise, consider eating a half-cup of navy beans with 3.8 grams, 1 cup of cold pasta with 1.4 grams, and one cold potato with 1.1 grams to help you achieve that target. Be sure to start small and gradually work your way up to avoid the flatulence and discomfort associated with taking too much too soon.

So, don't turn your back on all carbs; include resistant starch in your diet today!

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