



# Balance Blood Sugar

Your Path to Improve Insulin Sensitivity

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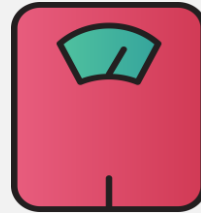
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# Say Goodbye to Sugar Spikes



Insulin sensitivity is one of those terms that often gets thrown around in health discussions, yet its significance cannot be overstated. Think of insulin as the key that unlocks the doors to your cells, allowing glucose - the sugar your body uses for energy - to enter. When your body becomes resistant to insulin, it's like losing the key, causing glucose to build up in your bloodstream instead of being used for fuel.



This not only leads to weight gain but can also contribute to the development of serious health conditions like type 2 diabetes and heart disease. But here's the good news: improving insulin sensitivity can have a transformative effect on your health. It can boost your energy levels, help with weight management and enhance your overall well-being. By taking charge of your insulin sensitivity, you're not just preventing health issues - you're actively choosing a vibrant, healthier life.



This plan is designed to guide you on a 12-month journey to enhance your insulin sensitivity. You'll learn actionable strategies, practical tips and effective habits that can easily be woven into your daily routine. We'll explore dietary choices, physical activity and lifestyle adjustments that are all rooted in the latest research. The goal is to help you establish a lifestyle that not only boosts your insulin sensitivity but also promotes overall wellness.

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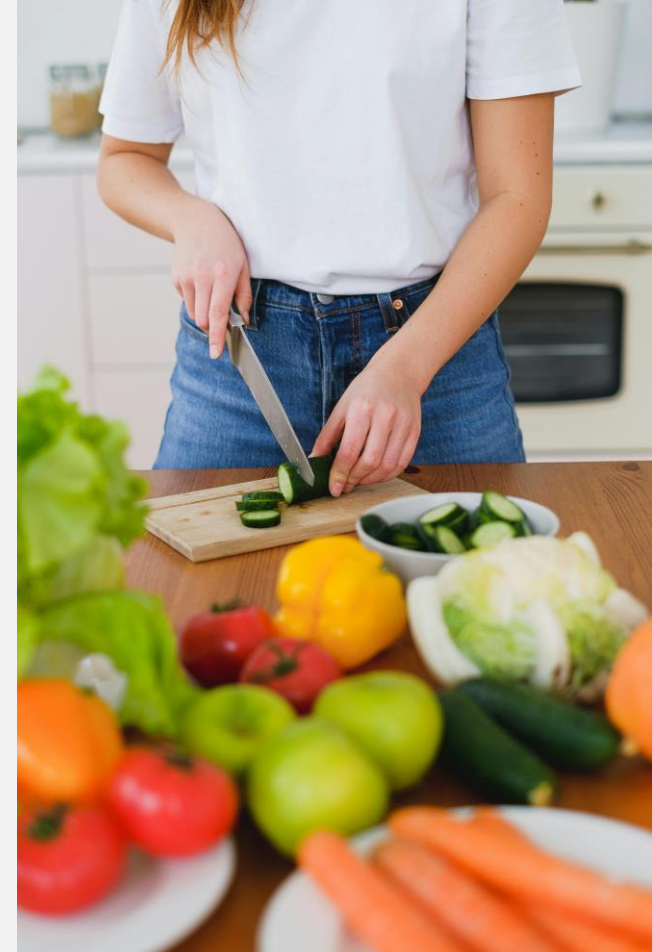
## Your Insulin Journey, Empower Your Health

## References



# Short-Term Plan

Optimising Your Diet for Insulin Sensitivity



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# Week 1: Nutrition Focus

Insulin sensitivity is a key factor in regulating blood sugar levels and overall metabolic health. Poor insulin sensitivity, or insulin resistance, can increase your risk of developing type 2 diabetes, obesity and other metabolic disorders. Over time, lifestyle factors such as diet, exercise and stress management can dramatically improve your body's ability to use insulin efficiently.

Understanding the role of insulin in the body is essential. Insulin is a hormone that helps your cells absorb glucose from the bloodstream to use as energy. When your cells stop responding properly to insulin - often due to lifestyle factors such as poor diet and physical inactivity - your body compensates by producing more insulin, leading to insulin resistance. The result? Elevated blood sugar levels, increased fat storage and heightened cravings.

This short-term plan will kickstart your journey to improved insulin sensitivity with simple, actionable steps over the next four weeks, helping you stabilise blood sugar and reduce cravings.





# Week 1: Nutrition Focus

## Action Plan

1. Reduce Refined Carbohydrates and Sugar Intake. To start improving insulin sensitivity, reduce refined carbs and sugars, which spike blood sugar and increase insulin demand. Focus on low glycemic index (GI) foods that cause a slower, more controlled rise in blood sugar levels. Opt for whole grains, leafy greens, and healthy fats.

- Tip: Swap white bread, pasta and sugary snacks for quinoa, oats and fresh vegetables. These foods have a lower glycemic load and will help stabilise blood sugar.

- Tip: Incorporate healthy fats like avocados, nuts and olive oil. These fats help reduce inflammation and improve cell response to insulin.

2. Increase Fibre Intake. Increasing dietary fibre, particularly soluble fibre, can slow glucose absorption and reduce insulin spikes after meals. Foods like fruits, vegetables and whole grains are excellent sources of fibre.

- Tip: Aim for 25-30 grams of fibre daily. Include foods like chia seeds, lentils and apples in your meals to naturally boost your intake.

- Tip: Start your day with a fibre-rich breakfast like oatmeal topped with berries or a smoothie packed with spinach, flaxseeds and almond butter.

Studies from The British Journal of Nutrition demonstrate that fibre-rich diets can improve insulin sensitivity, helping to regulate blood sugar and reduce cravings throughout the day.

# Try these Refined Carb Swaps

Research from Diabetes Care shows that diets high in refined sugars and carbohydrates can lead to poor insulin sensitivity, while low-glycemic foods can significantly improve insulin function within weeks.

Instead of this...	Try this...
White rice	Brown / wild rice or riced cauliflower
White bread	Wholewheat or wholegrain bread
Pasta	Wholewheat pasta, spaghetti squash or courgetti
Chips	Cauliflower mash, sweet potatoes or cooked and cooled white potatoes (with skin on)
Sugary breakfast cereal, cornflakes	High-fibre, low sugar cereal or low sugar bran flakes
Instant oats	Steel-cut / rolled oats
Crisps	Nuts or raw veggies for dipping

# Tips to Cut Down on Sugar

1. Take it slow: Gradually reduce sugar in your diet so your taste buds can adjust, helping to curb cravings.
2. Cook at home: By making your own meals, you control the ingredients and avoid hidden sugars.
3. Tweak your recipes: Many desserts taste just as good with less sugar - try cutting down the amount next time you bake.
4. Skip sugary drinks: Even diet versions can trigger cravings. Instead, try sparkling water with a splash of juice.
5. Avoid processed foods: Many packaged items, like soups and frozen dinners, have hidden sugars. Focus on fresh options instead.
6. Watch out when eating out: Ask for sauces and dressings on the side - they often contain lots of sugar.
7. Snack smarter: Swap out sweets or chocolate for naturally sweet snacks like fruits, peppers or a spoonful of natural peanut butter.
8. Read labels: Look for low-sugar options when buying packaged foods to help you cut down overall.



# Week 2: Prioritising Movement

Prioritising movement is key to improving insulin sensitivity because regular physical activity helps your body use insulin more efficiently. When you move, your muscles use more glucose, reducing blood sugar levels and easing the burden on your pancreas to produce insulin. Whether it's walking, strength training or even stretching, consistent movement boosts metabolism, helps manage weight and supports overall hormone balance - essential factors in maintaining healthy blood sugar levels and reducing the risk of insulin resistance.

## Action Plan

1. Start Walking After Meals. Walking after meals helps improve glucose metabolism and insulin sensitivity. Even a 10-15 minute walk after eating can reduce blood sugar spikes by encouraging your muscles to use glucose more efficiently. A study found that walking for 15 minutes after meals significantly improves insulin sensitivity, lowering blood sugar more effectively than longer bouts of exercise at other times .

- Tip: Incorporate a brisk walk after lunch and dinner, aiming for at least 10 minutes. Over the course of the week, build this up to 20 minutes.
- Tip: Use a step tracker and set a daily step goal. Start slowly and build up to 10,000 steps, which is ideal for maintaining insulin sensitivity.

2. Incorporate Resistance Training. Strength training improves insulin sensitivity by increasing muscle mass, which uses glucose more efficiently. Weightlifting or bodyweight exercises can make your muscles more responsive to insulin, helping you maintain steady blood sugar levels.

- Tip: Aim for three strength training sessions this week, targeting major muscle groups. Focus on exercises like squats, planks and push-ups.
- Tip: If you're ready, start incorporating light dumbbells or resistance bands.

# Week 3: Stress and Sleep

Chronic stress leads to elevated cortisol levels, which can negatively affect insulin sensitivity. A study in The Journal of Endocrinology and Metabolism found that chronic stress impairs insulin sensitivity, while stress management techniques significantly reduce cortisol and improve glucose metabolism.

## Action Plan

1. Reduce Stress with Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques. Implementing daily stress reduction techniques such as mindfulness meditation, yoga, or deep breathing can help reduce cortisol and improve insulin response.

- Tip: Dedicate at least 10-15 minutes daily to a stress-reducing activity, whether it's meditation, yoga, or simply deep breathing exercises.

- Tip: Consider using an app like Calm or Headspace to guide your mindfulness practice. Even a short, regular practice can make a big difference.

2. Prioritise Quality Sleep. Sleep deprivation has a profound effect on insulin sensitivity, leading to increased hunger, cravings and poor blood sugar regulation. Aim for 7-9 hours of quality sleep each night.

- Tip: Establish a consistent sleep routine by going to bed and waking up at the same time every day, even on weekends. This will help regulate your circadian rhythm and improve insulin sensitivity.

- Tip: Limit caffeine and screen time in the evening to avoid disrupting your sleep cycle. Wind down with calming activities like reading or taking a warm bath before bed.

# Week 4: Monitoring and Adapting

By the end of week four, start tracking your insulin sensitivity progress through specific markers, such as how you feel after meals, energy levels and possibly even monitoring blood sugar levels if recommended by a healthcare professional.

## Action Plan

1. Track Your Progress. Consistently monitoring progress helps you stay motivated and allows for adjustments where needed, ensuring that the changes you've implemented are truly working for your body.

- Tip: Use the tracker on the next slide, keep a journal or use a tracking app to record how your body is responding to dietary changes, physical activity and stress management. Note any improvements in energy, reduced cravings or better post-meal satiety.

- Tip: If you want more detailed results, consult with a healthcare professional to measure changes in fasting blood glucose levels as an objective marker of improved insulin sensitivity.

In these four weeks, you've laid the foundation for long-term improvements in insulin sensitivity. By making targeted dietary changes, increasing physical activity, managing stress and improving sleep, you're setting yourself up for sustainable success. Remember that insulin sensitivity is a long-term journey and these initial weeks are just the beginning. Stay committed to these habits and you'll continue to see benefits for months and years to come.

# Body Response Tracker

	Nutrition	Movement	Stress	Sleep	Notes
Monday					
Tuesday					
Wednesday					
Thursday					
Friday					
Saturday					
Sunday					

# Medium-Term Plan

Commit to change



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# Month 2: Fine-Tuning Your Dietary Choices

Insulin sensitivity is not just about short-term dietary changes; it's a long-term commitment that will benefit your overall health for years to come. Over the next 3-6 months, this program will build on the foundation you've established and guide you through sustainable lifestyle changes. Each step is designed to further improve insulin sensitivity, reduce cravings and help you develop habits that will last a lifetime. You should now have noticed some improvements in your energy, reduced post-meal blood sugar spikes and fewer cravings. Now it's time to deepen those habits and focus on consistency. The medium-term plan will expand on your dietary choices, exercise routine and stress management techniques. It will also introduce more advanced strategies to fine-tune your body's insulin response. During this phase, we'll focus on increasing the complexity of your meals and exercise, monitoring your progress and adapting your approach to ensure continued improvement.

## Action Plan

1. Add More Complex Carbohydrates. Now that you've reduced refined carbs and sugars, it's time to expand your intake of complex carbohydrates to fuel your body while maintaining blood sugar stability. Whole grains, legumes and starchy vegetables like butternut squash and carrots are great sources of slow-digesting carbs that provide sustained energy.

- Tip: Include a serving of complex carbohydrates at each meal. These will support steady energy levels.

- Tip: Pair carbohydrates with healthy fats and proteins to further reduce their impact on blood sugar.

2. Increase Protein Intake. Protein plays a critical role in regulating blood sugar levels. It slows down the digestion of carbohydrates and helps repair and build muscle tissue, both of which improve insulin sensitivity.

- Tip: Include a source of protein in every meal. This will help stabilise blood sugar levels and improve satiety, reducing cravings for sugary snacks.



# Months 3-4: Advanced Exercise Strategies

By now, you should be comfortable with your exercise routine and it's time to step it up.

## Action Plan

1. Increase Intensity with Interval Training. High-intensity interval training (HIIT) has been shown to dramatically improve insulin sensitivity by increasing muscle glucose uptake and fat oxidation. Incorporating HIIT two to three times per week will push your fitness to the next level.

- Tip: Begin with short intervals; 30 seconds of intense effort followed by 1-2 minutes of recovery. As you progress, increase the duration of the high-intensity intervals.

- Tip: Mix it up with exercises like sprinting, cycling, or bodyweight circuits to keep things interesting.

2. Incorporate More Resistance Training. Building more muscle through resistance training helps your body use glucose more efficiently, reducing insulin resistance over time. If you've been following the basic resistance exercises, it's time to increase the challenge.

- Tip: Aim to strength train 2-3 times a week, targeting all major muscle groups. Try a split routine that focuses on different body parts each session.

- Tip: Use progressive overload - gradually increase the weight or resistance to keep challenging your muscles.

# Months 5-6: Managing Lifestyle Factors

The gut plays a crucial role in insulin sensitivity and metabolic health. Research has shown that a healthy balance of gut bacteria can improve insulin response and reduce inflammation.

## Action Plan

1. Optimise Gut Health. Focus on incorporating more probiotics (from foods like yogurt, kefir and sauerkraut) and prebiotics (such as garlic, onions and bananas) to promote healthy gut flora.

- Tip: Include fermented foods in your diet at least three times per week to help introduce beneficial bacteria to your gut.

- Tip: Eat a variety of fibre-rich fruits and vegetables to feed your gut bacteria and promote a healthy microbiome.

2. Continue Managing Stress. You've already learned how stress can negatively impact insulin sensitivity, and it's important to keep stress management as a priority. Continue to practice mindfulness or meditation, but this time, focus on deepening your practice and exploring new techniques like progressive muscle relaxation or guided visualisation.

- Tip: Set aside 20-30 minutes daily for mindfulness or relaxation exercises. Find a method that resonates with you, whether it's journaling, yoga or breathing exercises.

- Tip: Reflect on how stress affects your eating habits and consider techniques like mindful eating to help overcome stress-induced snacking.

# Long-Term Plan

One Year Sustainable Success



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# Months 7-9: Evolving Your Dietary Approach

The long-term phase is where all the hard work from the short and medium-term plans begins to truly pay off. Insulin sensitivity will have improved, but maintaining and optimizing it will now require consistency. This stage is about embedding those healthy habits deeply into your daily life and fine-tuning them for long-term success. The focus now is not only on what you eat or how you exercise but also on achieving balance in all aspects of your life for sustainable metabolic health.

## Action Plan

1. Introduce Intermittent Fasting (IF) or Time-Restricted Eating (TRE). At this point, your body may be ready to handle more advanced strategies, such as IF or TRE. Both of these approaches can improve insulin sensitivity by allowing your body to experience longer periods without eating, during which insulin levels naturally decrease, allowing cells to respond more efficiently to the hormone.

- Tip: Start with a 12:12 fasting/eating window (e.g., eat between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.) and gradually narrow the window to 10:14 or 8:16 if it suits your lifestyle.

- Tip: Stay mindful of the quality of your meals during the eating window; focus on nutrient-dense, whole foods to support energy and reduce blood sugar fluctuations.

2. Tailor Your Carbohydrate Intake Around Activity Levels. You've already mastered the balance of complex carbohydrates in your diet, but now it's time to get more strategic. Tailor your carbohydrate intake based on your activity levels - eat more carbs on days with intense exercise and less on rest days. This technique helps the body efficiently utilise glucose when it's needed and limits excess that can be stored as fat.

- Tip: On days with vigorous exercise, include 1-2 servings of starchy carbs like oats or brown rice at key meals to support muscle glycogen stores. On rest days, focus on low-glycemic vegetables and fruits while reducing grain-based carbohydrates.

Known as carbohydrate cycling - when paired with exercise, is an effective way to improve insulin sensitivity and reduce body fat over time.

# Months 10-12: Enhancing Lifestyle Habits

While resistance training and high-intensity interval training (HIIT) have been the foundation of your exercise routine, it's important to incorporate low-impact aerobic activities for overall cardiovascular health. Walking, cycling, or swimming for 30-60 minutes a few times a week can enhance fat oxidation and improve metabolic flexibility, which supports insulin sensitivity.

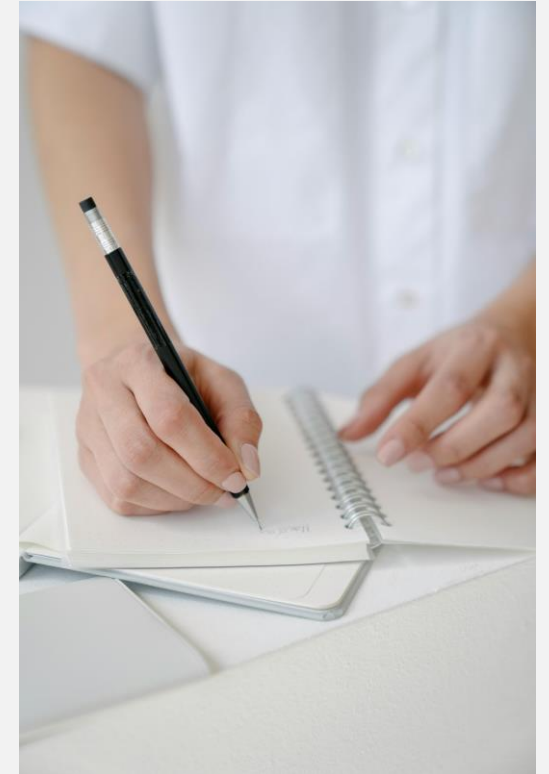
## Action Plan

1. Incorporate Low-Impact Aerobic Exercise. Regular aerobic exercise increases insulin-stimulated glucose uptake in both muscle and fat tissues, significantly improving metabolic health.

- Tip: Make aerobic exercise enjoyable - choose activities you genuinely like to reduce the risk of burnout.

2. Manage Stress for Long-Term Balance. Stress management continues to play a critical role in long-term insulin sensitivity. By now, mindfulness and meditation should be familiar tools, but it's time to explore more holistic methods, such as spending time in nature or incorporating restorative yoga and breathing exercises. Stress can derail progress, so focus on embedding long-term strategies for resilience.

- Tip: Schedule weekly activities that allow for deep relaxation, such as a nature walk, yoga session or a few minutes of deep-breathing exercises before bed.



# Months 10-12: Living for Longevity

As you approach the 12-month mark, monitoring progress becomes critical to ensure continued improvement. Keep track of key metrics like energy levels and mood. Additionally, stay flexible in adjusting your diet and exercise routine based on progress, setbacks or new goals.

## Action Plan

1. Monitor Progress and Make Adjustments as Needed. Regular self-monitoring of progress helps reinforce healthy behaviours and improves long-term outcomes in managing insulin sensitivity .

- Tip: Undertake regular check-ins every 4-6 weeks to assess key metrics.

- Tip: Adjust dietary or exercise habits if you notice plateaus in progress. Small tweaks, such as changing your carbohydrate sources or adding new types of exercise, can make a significant difference.

2. Celebrate Your Success and Set New Goals. By the end of this long-term program, you should feel proud of the progress you've made. It's important to recognise the hard work you've put in over the past year and celebrate both big and small wins. Setting new goals will help keep you motivated moving forward.

By the end of the 12 months, you should see a significant improvement in insulin sensitivity, reduced cravings, and greater control over your metabolic health. The habits formed during this journey are now embedded into your daily life, allowing you to maintain and enhance the benefits you've achieved. Keep in mind that this is a lifelong journey - your insulin sensitivity will continue to improve if you stay committed to these healthy habits.



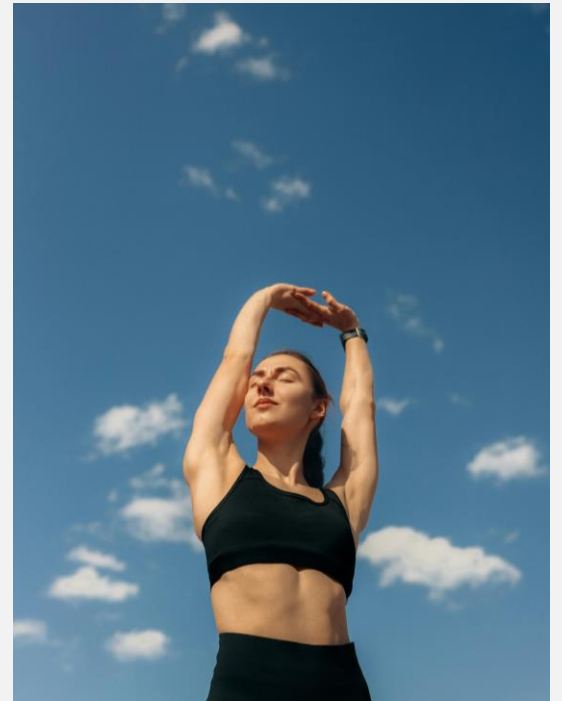
# From Foundation to Future, Long-Term Health

Congratulations! You've taken vital steps towards transforming your health, building stronger habits that not only enhance insulin sensitivity but also elevate your overall well-being. By learning about the science behind blood sugar balance, making smart food choices, incorporating regular movement, and managing stress, you've equipped yourself with powerful tools to thrive.

The journey doesn't end here - it's just the beginning. The strategies you've adopted are your roadmap to long-term metabolic health and the benefits will continue to unfold. Every meal, every workout, every mindful moment brings you closer to a healthier, more balanced life. Stay committed to your goals, embrace the progress you've made and look forward with optimism, knowing you have the power to maintain and enhance your success.

Remember, progress isn't always linear, and it's okay to seek guidance along the way. If you have any questions, feedback, or just want to check in on how things are going, don't hesitate to reach out. We're here to support you through every phase of your journey. Let's keep moving forward - together!

Whether you're just getting started or ready to take things to the next level, we're here to make the process simple, motivating and completely focused on your unique goals. Together, we'll make sure you get the maximum benefit from everything we have to offer!



# The small print

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## Disclaimer

At Thrive Nutrition, we want to make sure you're fully informed. While our action plans and guides offer expert advice and practical strategies for better health, they do not replace medical care. These guides are designed to support your wellness journey, but they are not medical advice and we don't claim to diagnose, treat or cure any medical conditions.

Our plans are created independently of your medical history, medications (past or present) or any ongoing treatments. That's why it's essential that you check in with your doctor, especially if you're being treated or supervised for a specific condition. They'll ensure that any changes you make work safely alongside your current care.

Your health is personal and we're here to support you on your journey. But it's important to keep your healthcare provider in the loop about anything that might affect your wellbeing. Let's make sure you're supported on all fronts as you move forward!

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