

# **The Insulin Spike Isn't the Villain You Think It Is**

You may have heard that insulin spikes after eating are something to worry about — a sign that your body is on the path to weight gain, insulin resistance, or even diabetes. Some health practitioners have even started advising patients to keep their insulin levels as flat as possible after meals. But a growing body of research suggests this thinking may be getting things backwards.

A study tracking over 300 women for five years found that people with a stronger insulin response after eating actually had *better* blood sugar control over time — not worse. Specifically, those with the most robust post-meal insulin surges were about five times less likely to develop prediabetes or diabetes compared to those whose insulin response was weakest. Their bodies also showed healthier beta cell function — the cells in your pancreas responsible for producing insulin in the first place.

The nuance that matters: it's not just about how high your insulin goes after a meal, but how that response compares to your blood sugar levels going in. When researchers accounted for that baseline, the so-called "spike" looked far less sinister — and in fact looked protective. The lead researcher put it plainly: a strong post-meal insulin response, when measured correctly, is associated with beneficial effects, not harmful ones. In short, your body surging insulin after a meal isn't a warning sign — it's your metabolism doing exactly what it's supposed to do.

The key, researchers explain, is context. When insulin levels are measured relative to baseline glucose (rather than in isolation), the picture flips: higher corrected insulin responses were consistently associated with favorable metabolic outcomes. Those with the strongest post-meal insulin responses were up to five times less likely to develop prediabetes or diabetes compared to those with the weakest responses.

The takeaway for readers? Practitioners who advise patients to flatten their insulin response after meals may be working from an incomplete picture of the science. A healthy, well-functioning pancreas is *supposed* to respond vigorously to food — and that response appears to be protective, not harmful.

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