

## South Asian Diet

### *Is there a meal plan that I should follow?*

Your meal plan needs to be individualized for you based upon your unique needs. A comprehensive diet history, past medical history and review of labs by a **Registered Dietitian** is recommended. Some *generic* guidelines are noted below:

Include a source of protein at meals-- 1 cup thick dal/chhole/rajma/pulses at lunch and dinner

Bring on the veggies— high in fiber

Snack on nuts ( 1/4 - 1/3 cup almonds)

Emphasize whole grains and high fiber carbs only (whole wheat chappatis, brown rice, dals, lentils and pulses)

Emphasize antioxidants and anti-inflammatory agents from garlic, ginger, turmeric, and spices

Avoid foods high in saturated fat such as whole milk, mawa, coconut, ghee and processed foods containing hydrogenated vegetable oils as well as those made from “maida” or refined white flour

For details, please refer to “Carbohydrate distribution and Indian meal plan” on the PowerPoint Presentation on the Saheli Website.

### *What are some blood glucose guidelines that I should be aware of?*

Blood glucose guidelines should be individualized to the needs of the patient. Please check with your Physician re: frequency of testing, and individual goals (general guidelines are provided in the PowerPoint Presentation on the Saheli website)

How does this work in the context of an Indian diet? What is healthful / not healthful?

Healthful--Rich in fiber, vitamins, anti-oxidants, anti-inflammatory agents, relatively low in saturated fats: whole grains, legumes, ginger, garlic, turmeric, spices

Not so healthful--Potentially high in carbs (many of which could be fast acting carbs, such as white rice, causing spikes in blood glucose). It could be low in protein, and potentially high in saturated fats if coconut, mawa, ghee are used liberally.

## SAHELI SUPPORT AND FRIENDSHIP SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN AND FAMILIES

### What Is Saheli?

Saheli is a community-based women’s organization in Massachusetts serving South Asian women and their families since 1996. Saheli was founded in collaboration with the India Association of Greater Boston (IAGB) with the mission of providing services to the South Asian community both locally and across the United States. Saheli works in Nashua NH and Shrewsbury MA as well.

Volunteers provide many support services, resources and guidance in areas of family abuse, career and health planning, as well as cultural and social opportunities. Moreover, Saheli has a special emergency fund to help women in crises. Each year, Saheli holds fund raisers to support services for the South Asian community. We welcome volunteers.

**Email [sahelihelp@gmail.com](mailto:sahelihelp@gmail.com) or call Saheli at 866-472-4354**

Saheli offers resources to the entire South Asian community regardless of religion, ethnicity, age or gender. The group speaks many languages. Saheli is guided by an executive body of core members who are all South Asian women and an advisory board of distinguished community members of many races and ethnicities. Saheli welcomes you as a **volunteer**.

## SOUTH ASIAN DIET: FRIEND OR FOE?

### MANAGEMENT OF TYPE 2 DIABETES IN THE SOUTH ASIAN POPULATION



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# DIET AND TYPE II DIABETES

## **What are the risk factors?**

Some of the risk factors include:

- ◆ Overweight ( increased BMI/abdominal fat)
- ◆ Ethnicity: for e.g., South Asian lineage
- ◆ Sedentary lifestyle
- ◆ Family history of diabetes
- ◆ Women with a history of gestational diabetes or those who may have given birth to a baby weighing more than 9 lbs
- ◆ Women with a history of PCOS ( polycystic ovary syndrome)
- ◆ Currently pre-diabetic is (Hb A1C >5.7 but < 6.5)

South Asians are at a much higher risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, compared with other ethnic groups and Caucasians as a result of a combination of genetic and environmental factors. South Asians have increased abdominal fat compared to Caucasians thus putting them at higher risk for both heart disease and diabetes.

The “cut-off” BMI (Body Mass Index, which measures weight relative to height), for the Asian population is considerably lower than a BMI of 25 that is used for the general population. This is because compared with Caucasian people, South Asians have increased abdominal fat and greater insulin resistance at similar levels of BMI.

### **What is diabetes?**

Diabetes is a condition in which blood sugars are above the normal range.

### **What is Type 2 diabetes?**

Type 2 diabetes occurs when cells in muscle, liver and fat tissues do not utilize the hormone insulin effectively. Insulin is a hormone produced by a gland called pancreas which moves glucose from the blood into the cells for energy. Higher abdominal obesity (even with a relatively low BMI) has an “insulin blocking” action also known as insulin resistance as a result of which blood sugars rise above the normal range.

### **How is Type 2 diabetes diagnosed?**

A random blood sugar > or equal to 200 mg/dl with classic symptoms of polyuria, polydipsia and unexplained weight loss, or

A fasting blood glucose > or equal to 126 mg/dl, or

2 hour oral glucose tolerance test > 200 mg/dl

The hemoglobin (hgb) A1C blood test measures a 2-3 month average blood sugar level that can be done at any time of the day. An A1C > 6.5 is seen in full blown diabetes. Although controversial, the A1C is not recommended for the diagnosis of diabetes (it is less sensitive than the fasting blood glucose).

## **How do I modify my risk?**

Increased physical activity (150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week, or as directed by a physician)

Decrease excess carbohydrates, especially refined carbohydrates, reduce saturated fats, include lean proteins and include moderate amounts of unsaturated fats

Decrease abdominal obesity. As applicable, this may mean taking an inch or 2 off the waist line and/or losing between 5-10% of your body weight.

### **SOUTH ASIAN FOOD HABITS**

## **Can you explain how food, particularly, carbohydrates impact blood sugars?**

Carbohydrates are fuel for your body and provide an essential source of energy. However in excess amounts they cause blood sugars to rise.

Refined or processed carbohydrates such as white bread, white flour (maida), etc., cause quick spikes in blood sugar, followed by a crash. Whole grains, pulses (dals, channa, rajma), fruits, and vegetables however, have fiber which causes a slower rise in blood glucose, increases satiety (satisfaction) after a meal and prevents “hunger” attacks

Post-meal blood sugars are hence lower after meals that contain balanced amounts of high fiber carbohydrates + protein (dal/ chhole, etc and “desirable fats” (oil, nuts).