

Rice, Diabetes & Hispanics

Hispanics eat a lot of rice! - Fact or Fiction?

Hispanics have a higher incidence of diabetes than other people – Fact or Fiction?

Both of these statements are true, but do not make the mistake of jumping to the conclusion that rice causes diabetes. People with a Hispanic family origin do have a higher incidence of diabetes than average. In fact, Hispanics are nearly twice as likely as non-Hispanic whites to develop diabetes. Does it have anything to do with eating rice? No! Diabetes is not caused by eating rice any more than eating white bread, potatoes, or cereal. The main culprit for the most common form of diabetes is heredity and increased body weight resulting from poor eating habits and lack of exercise.

The only connection between rice and diabetes is that rice is a carbohydrate and when carbohydrates are digested in your body, the result is glucose, a form of sugar. To get the sugar from your blood into the cells where it is used as energy, your body must produce insulin, which acts as a go-between. If your body does not produce insulin or not enough insulin, the result is too much sugar (glucose) in your blood and the outcome, if high enough, may be diagnosed as Diabetes.

First, let us look at the three types of diabetes—Type 2, Type 1, and Gestational.

- **Type 2 Diabetes** is actually the most common form of diabetes. It is a malfunction of your pancreas where it can not produce enough insulin to handle the sugar in your blood. This type of diabetes seems to be related to increased weight, sedentary lifestyle and age and can usually be controlled simply by losing weight, eating sensibly, exercising, and maybe taking a pill.
- **Type 1 Diabetes** is much less common. It only affects about 5 to 10% of people with diabetes. In this case your pancreas stops making insulin completely and you have to take shots of insulin to get the sugar in your blood into the cells. The cause of Type 1 Diabetes is not clear but it is thought to result from a virus.
- **Gestational Diabetes** occurs in 2 to 5% of pregnancies, resulting from changes in a woman's hormone levels. The risk is higher among obese and older women. Blood sugar control during a pregnancy is important for the health of the baby. Gestational Diabetes is usually controlled by diet.

It is important to control your blood sugar because high levels of sugar in your blood can slowly damage your eyes, heart, kidneys, nerves, legs, and feet. Left untreated, diabetes can lead to serious complications including heart disease, stroke, and even death. Simple steps can go a long way in winning the fight against diabetes.

Most people with diabetes have Type 2, which is preventable. So whether you already have diabetes or want to prevent the occurrence of diabetes, you need to make some lifestyle changes. You may think that you will need to give up your favorite foods, such as rice and tortillas, but that is not true. Grains, including rice, are still the foundation of a healthy diet, and should be included.

For more help with choosing healthy foods, click on the Camino Mágico Brochure (below), developed by Oldways and LNC. It is designed to help Latinos eat healthier based upon traditional Latino eating patterns. The pocket-sized, bilingual guide is packed with easily accessible nutritional tools including:



- Newly-redesigned Latin American Diet Pyramid
- Calorie control guide
- Basics of reading food labels
- Plate showing the healthy distribution of food groups
- Meal ideas and suggestions that range from Pescado Veracruz to Bean Tortilla Melt
- Supermarket map putting Camino Mágico's suggestions in their real-world context
- Supermarket shopping list keyed to the Pyramid's guidelines

(http://www.oldwayspt.org/pdf/press_room/graphics_downloads/CaminoMagico.pdf)

For more information about preventing and controlling diabetes:

Find additional information on the [Latino Nutrition Coalition](#) website.

Contact the National Diabetes Education Program's by calling 1.800.438.5383 or visit their website at www.ndep.nih.gov.

Locate the names of [American Diabetes Association Recognized Diabetes Education Programs](#) in your area or call 1.800.DIABETES (1.800.342.2383).

Contact [The American Dietetic Association](#) at 1.800.366.2383. Ask for the names of dietitians in your area that specialize in diabetes.

Call the American [Association of Diabetes Educators](#), at 1.800.TEAM UP4 (1.800.832.6874). Ask for the names of several diabetes educators in your zip code.