

Hyperglycemia in Cancer Patients

What is hyperglycemia?



Hyperglycemia is high levels of sugar, or glucose, in the blood.

What often causes hyperglycemia in cancer patients?

- Having cancer and going through cancer treatment is stressful. Treatment for cancer may raise your blood glucose levels. Your body is responding to treatments and stress with hormonal changes that affect your blood glucose levels. High blood glucose levels are not good for your health or well-being.
- You do not need to be diabetic to be hyperglycemic
- Some medications can cause hyperglycemic symptoms

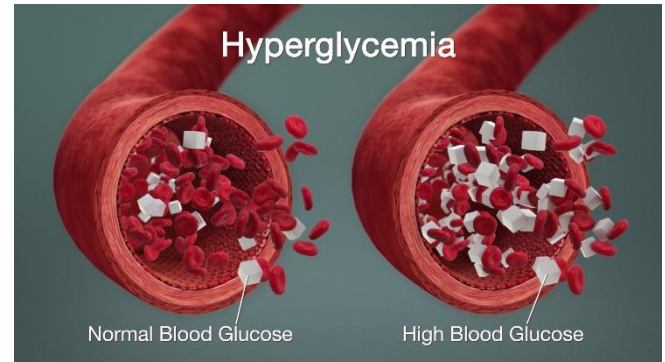


Figure 1 Hyperglycemia: high levels of sugar in the blood

How do I know if I am hyperglycemic?

Hyperglycemia symptoms may include:

- ✓ urinating often
- ✓ excessive thirst
- ✓ intense, unusual hunger
- ✓ headaches
- ✓ blurred vision
- ✓ weight loss
- ✓ fatigue
- ✓ irritability



Your family doctor or oncologist (cancer doctor) will tell you if your blood glucose level is too high and if you need to make changes to help lower it.

What can I do to try to prevent hyperglycemia?

You may not be able to prevent hyperglycemia, but there are things that you can do to help.

What should I do?

- ✓ Eat smaller meals throughout the day, rather than three big meals.
 - ✓ Plan your day so you do not go longer than 4 to 6 hours without eating a meal or snack
 - ✓ Have meals and snacks with:
 - a **carbohydrate food** (examples: whole grain bread or crackers, brown rice)
 - **protein** (examples: egg, chicken, turkey, nuts) and
 - **healthy fats** (examples: olive oil, nuts and nut butters)
- ✓ **Exercise** is one of the best ways to lower blood sugar levels. Taking a walk can be a great way to exercise. Talk to your health care team to talk about which exercise is best for you.

What should I avoid?

You should avoid:

- ✗ Foods with **simple carbohydrates**
 - ✗ examples of these include: soda/pop, fruit juice, honey, white or brown sugar, syrup, candy, desserts and sweetened drinks
- ✗ Eating fast food, fried foods, and high sugar foods before bed
- ✗ **Unnecessary stress**. Try to make healthy choices and rest your mind and body when you can.

What should I do if I am concerned about hyperglycemia?

Talk to your healthcare team about any concerning symptoms you may be experiencing. Follow the instructions your healthcare team gives you. Your health team may refer you to endocrinology to help with any hyperglycemic symptoms and management.

Fats in food alone, do not raise blood sugars. Healthy fats such as olive oil, avocado, nuts and seeds are ok to include in your diet in small amounts.



The Carlo Fidani Regional Cancer Centre **905-813-4411**

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www.thp.ca/patientservices/cancerservices

Important Note:

This resource was created by the Trillium Health Partners to give patients, families and caregivers general information about hyperglycemia in cancer patients. The information in this resource does not replace medical advice. Every effort has been made to ensure information in this resource is complete, correct and up-to-date, but no guarantee is made to that effect. If you have any questions or concerns about the information in this resource, please talk to your healthcare team.

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References:Hyperglycemia (high blood sugar): Symptoms, treatments, and more (medicalnewstoday.com); Change Your Diet to Manage High Blood Glucose during Cancer Treatment (2022) University Health Network; Figure 1 was modified and retrieved from (Feb2022): <https://www.scientificanimations.com/hyperglycemia-symptoms-causes-complications-treatment/> ; Graphic icon retrieved from: (2022) <https://thenounproject.com/>