The Toledo Clinic | Lateef Family & Lifestyle Medicine

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# The Lifestyle and Culinary Medicine Newsletter



This Month's Focus: **Navigating Diabetes Awareness Month with Purpose & Flavor**

November is **National Diabetes Awareness Month**, making it the perfect time to explore how targeted lifestyle choices and daily culinary habits can transform metabolic health. Whether your goal is to manage type 2 diabetes, prevent prediabetes, or simply optimize blood sugar stability, small, intentional shifts in how we cook and move make a profound difference.

In lifestyle and culinary medicine, we look beyond restrictive diets and focus instead on nutrient density, functional meal assembly, and sustainable daily habits. From leveraging high-fiber whole foods to slow glucose absorption, to pairing carbohydrates with lean protein and healthy fats, the food on your plate serves as a powerful tool for blood sugar balance.

This month, we are diving into actionable, evidence-based strategies and flavorful, plant-forward recipes designed to nourish your body, keep energy levels steady, and support overall metabolic wellness without sacrificing taste.

With care,

*Dr. Lateef*

## Culinary Medicine Tip: Master the "Order of Eating"

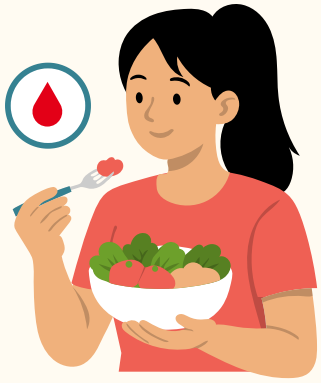
Have you ever noticed how the sequence in which you eat your meal can change how you feel afterward? Beyond what is on your plate, how you sequence your bites is one of the simplest behavioral strategies for stabilizing blood sugar and maintaining steady energy.

### The Science of Food Sequencing:

When you consume refined or starchy carbohydrates on an empty stomach, they hit the small intestine rapidly, causing a sharp surge in blood glucose and a subsequent spike in insulin. By strategically altering the order in which you eat your food groups, you create a physiological buffer. This has been shown in research; however, it is not a substitute for pharmacological treatment for Diabetes. But can still play a small and meaningful role in blood sugar control.

- **Start with Fiber (Vegetables and Greens):** Fiber creates a viscous, mesh-like matrix in the upper gastrointestinal tract. This slows gastric emptying and delays carbohydrate absorption.
- **Follow with Protein and Healthy Fats:** Protein and fats trigger the release of satiety hormones (like PYY and GLP-1), which further slow stomach emptying and dampen glycemic impact.
- **Finish with Carbohydrates:** By the time the starches and complex carbohydrates arrive in the digestive tract, the digestive "highway" is already regulated, resulting in a much flatter, gentler glucose curve.








### How to Apply It at the Table:

You don't need to eat your entire salad before taking a bite of anything else. Simply **pilot your meal by starting with a few bites of vegetables or greens, incorporating your protein and fats next, and enjoying your starches toward the middle or end of the meal**. It is a small shift in habit with a metabolic payoff.

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## Lifestyle Spotlight: The 10-Minute Post-Meal Walk- Your Metabolic Shortcut

When it comes to blood sugar management, one of the most powerful clinical tools at our disposal requires no prescription, no expensive equipment, and just ten minutes of your time: the **post-meal walk.**

### The Physiology: What Happens When You Move

Shortly after you finish eating, digested carbohydrates enter the bloodstream as glucose, prompting your pancreas to release insulin to shuttle that fuel into your cells.
When you sit immediately after a meal, circulating glucose peaks sharply. However, engaging in light muscular contraction such as a casual 10-minute walk started within 30 minutes of finishing your food triggers a remarkable physiological mechanism:

- **Insulin-Independent Glucose Uptake:** Your working muscles pull glucose straight out of the bloodstream without needing extra insulin.
- **Blunting the Postprandial Peak:** By giving circulating glucose an immediate destination, gentle movement flattens the glycemic curve, significantly lowering the overall glycemic burden on your vessels and reducing subsequent insulin demand.

### Putting It into Practice

You don't need a rigorous workout. A leisurely stroll around the neighborhood, pacing while catching up on a phone call, or walking the office hallway right after lunch is entirely sufficient. Think of it less as "exercise" and more as an active extension of your meal.



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# **Featured Recipe:** Lentil & Roasted Delicata Bowl with Lemon-Tahini Drizzle

This vibrant, autumn-inspired bowl pairs earthy legumes with slow-roasted winter squash, hearty greens, and healthy fats. It delivers robust flavor while keeping postprandial glucose stable and supporting long-term metabolic health.

## Metabolic Breakdown: Why This Recipe Works:

- **Soluble & Insoluble Fiber Dual-Action (~14g per serving):** French green lentils contain high concentrations of soluble fiber (pectin and gums), which forms a gel-like matrix in the digestive tract. This dramatically slows gastric emptying and glucose absorption. Insoluble fiber from the squash skin and kale adds bulk to promote healthy gut microbiota diversity and short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) production.
- **Protein & Healthy Fat Pairing:** Protein from French green lentils (12g) combined with healthy monounsaturated fats and lignans from sesame tahini buffers glycemic response, blunting glucose spikes and increasing satiety gut hormones (GLP-1 and PYY).
- **Polyphenol & Micronutrient Density:** Delicata squash offers complex carbohydrates bound within a matrix of carotenoids, potassium, and magnesium. Magnesium is an essential cofactor in glucose transport and tyrosine kinase activity at insulin receptors.

### Ingredients: Base & Roasted Vegetables

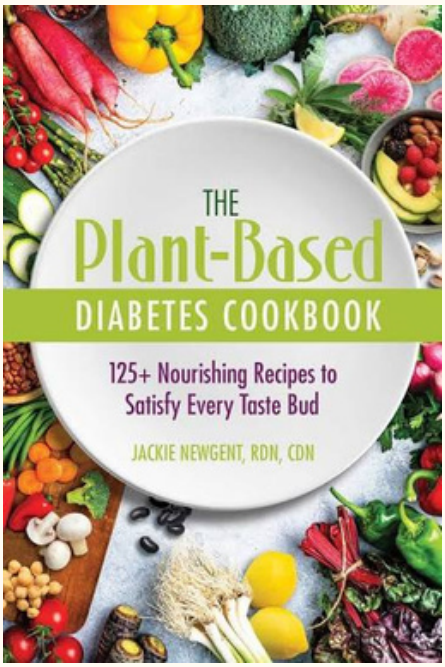
- 1 can, 15 oz, French green lentils (or black Beluga lentils), rinsed
- 2 medium Delicata squash (or halved small Butternut squash), seeds removed, ½ inch diced
- 1 tbsp Extra virgin olive oil
- 1 tsp Ground cumin
- ½ tsp Ground cinnamon
- ½ tsp Smoked paprika
- ½ tsp Sea salt
- 4 cups Tuscan (Lacinato) kale, stems removed and leaves finely ribboned
- ¼ cup Raw pumpkin seeds (pepitas), toasted
- ¼ cup Pomegranate seeds (for tart finish and anthocyanins)

### Ingredients: Lemon-Tahini Drizzle

- 3 tbsp Well-stirred runny sesame tahini
- 2 tbsp Fresh lemon juice
- 1 clove Garlic, finely minced or grated
- 3 tbsp Warm water (as needed)
- Pinch of fine sea salt

## Instructions:

1. **Roast the Squash:** Preheat your oven to 400°F. Toss the delicata squash with extra virgin olive oil, cumin, cinnamon, smoked paprika, and salt. Spread in a single layer on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Roast for 20-25 minutes until tender and caramelized at the edges, flipping halfway through.
2. **Lentils:** Drain any excess liquid and gently fold in a squeeze of lemon juice.
3. **Prepare the Tahini Drizzle:** Whisk together tahini, fresh lemon juice, grated garlic, and salt in a small bowl. The mixture will thicken initially; slowly whisk in warm water 1 tablespoon at a time until smooth and pourable.
4. **Assemble the Bowl:** Massage the ribboned kale with a drop of olive oil and lemon for 30 seconds to soften the fibers. Divide kale into four bowls, top with warm simmered lentils, and lay roasted squash across the top.
5. **Garnish & Serve:** Drizzle generously with lemon-tahini dressing and finish with toasted pepitas and pomegranate arils.




## Book Suggestion

### The Plant-Based Diabetes Cookbook

**by Jackie Newgent, RDN, CDN**

It delivers over 125 delicious, plant-forward recipes that align with culinary medicine principles by centering fiber-rich whole grains, legumes, and produce. Rather than strict carb-counting, it focuses on nutrient-dense, flexible meal assembly to manage and prevent diabetes without sacrificing flavor.

## Empowering Your Journey

As we navigate National Diabetes Awareness Month, remember that lifestyle medicine is fundamentally about empowerment. Managing metabolic health or living with diabetes is not about perfection or rigid restrictions, it is about discovering the extraordinary power residing in your everyday choices.

One of the core tenets of lifestyle medicine is that **you are the primary driver of your own health journey.** While medical guidance and clinical care provide crucial support, the most impactful choices happen right in your kitchen, on your daily walks, and in the sustainable habits you build over time. Every nourishing meal you prepare and every brief post-meal walk you take is a direct investment in your long-term vitality.

Take pride in being an active partner in your own care. Small, deliberate actions taken consistently and with patience build incredible momentum over time.

Here is to nourishing your body and taking confident, active steps toward vibrant health this month!






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