The 10-Minute Walk Window That Steadies Your Blood Sugar

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For managing your blood sugar, your walk’s timing may matter more than its length. Here’s the precise window that makes all the difference.

During the decade I’ve spent researching and writing about health, one study stands out as being the single most influential over my own everyday habits: a high-profile 2025 paper in the ***European Journal of Cardiology*** on the benefits of walking.

You probably saw it on the news. The authors found that, above a daily count of 2,300 steps, every additional 1,000 steps led to a 17% reduction in the risk of developing a major adverse cardiovascular event (MACE). After 10,000 steps, some heart benefits admittedly wane, but stroke risk continues to fall.

When I read this, I promptly bought an Apple Watch and began upping my daily step count. Generally speaking, more is better when it comes to walking unless you’re nursing an injury, or at high risk of one. I shoot for 14,000 steps a day when I can. I don’t always make it. It’s still worth trying.

But a new study suggests that there’s one time that a shorter walk can eclipse the benefits of a longer one, depending on how you time it. Published in the journal ***Scientific Reports***, the paper concluded that people who walked for just 10 minutes immediately after eating sugar had better glycemic control compared to people who walked for 30 minutes, a half hour after eating the same meal.

The study is small, but for the first time since reading the EJC study, I plan to shake up my walking routine based on the evidence. Here’s how the new study will probably redefine my habits, and how it could shape yours, too.

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How Glycemic Control Affects Your Health

Your blood sugar deeply impacts your health, primarily because your organs use glucose as an important source of fuel. In particular, your brain, red blood cells, and inner kidney cells rely exclusively on glucose for energy, making them especially dependent on healthy levels. Your nerves need glucose for electrical signalling, meaning they can also suffer if your numbers are high or low.

Dr. Florence Comite, MD, an endocrinologist and author of the New York Times bestseller, ***Invincible: Defy Your Genetic Destiny To Live Better, Longer*** (published this April by Little, Brown Spark), says that keeping glucose in an optimal range is “the most powerful way to reverse biological aging and every major chronic disease.”

“Elevated sugar leads to diabetes, which causes unrelenting tissue damage throughout your organs, brain, heart, liver, kidneys, eyes, skin, nerves, and blood vessels. Insulin resistance and diabetes also raise the risk of various cancers, inflammation, dementia, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular disease. Because insulin is a fat-storing hormone, poor glucose control fuels visceral fat accumulation and makes it nearly impossible to lose fat,” she tells Super Age.

In contrast, maintaining optimal sugar and avoiding sudden spikes “protects the heart, supports brain function, preserves kidney health, and reduces the risk of stroke, heart attack, and diabetic cardiomyopathy, retinopathy, and neuropathy,” Dr. Comite says.

In other words, blood sugar may seem like just one signal of many, but it carries more

weight than people realize.

What Numbers Should I Aim For?

According to the **CDC**, your target numbers may be different depending on your age, underlying health conditions, or other factors. As a rule of thumb, these are the "normal" levels most people aim for:

- Before a meal: 80 to 130 mg/dL.
- Two hours after the start of a meal: Less than 180 mg/dL.

But as Dr. Comite wrote for Super Age in March, **"normal" isn't all it's cracked up to be** when it comes to your health stats.

"The goal isn't just to avoid diabetes, it's to maintain an *optimal* glucose – largely between 70 to 120 – patterns that resemble rolling hills rather than steep mountain peaks, representing a truly healthy metabolism that supports long-term vitality," she explains.

If your numbers are off, your doctor may recommend healthy eating, physical activity, and a plan to monitor your numbers. Medication can also help you get your blood sugar levels under control, lowering your risk of both acute and long-term complications of diabetes.

Walking After Eating Is Always a Good Idea

In general, taking a postprandial walk — that is, a walk after you eat — is a good way to reset your system, aiding in digestion and preventing sugar spikes.

"Think about what happens after you eat a meal: your body breaks down carbohydrates into glucose, the main sugar found in your blood, and your glucose

(sugar) rises steeply, peaking about 30 minutes after a meal," says Dr. Comite. "When you take a walk after a meal, your muscles need fuel to power your physical activity, so they act like a sponge, drawing glucose from the bloodstream into muscle cells. That effectively reduces circulating sugar in your body. "

Because muscles are the body's largest storage vessel for sugar, putting them to use means the body can more effectively clear post-meal glucose, she adds.

"Research shows that a ten-minute walk taken shortly after a meal yields significantly lower glucose levels in the following two hours compared to not walking at all. In my book ***Invincible***, I recommend this as one of the most accessible tools anyone can adopt to start more effectively managing their glucose today," the endocrinologist says.

Why Walk Timing Can Matter More Than Duration

The surprising finding from the study is of course not that walking is beneficial. It's that walking for a shorter period closer to when you eat is better than walking for a longer period even just 30 minutes later.

When we asked Dr. Comite to explain why, she told us that the key to the walk's effectiveness is to start moving before the glucose peaks in your blood stream 30 to 90 minutes after eating.

"Once you get that postprandial spike, your pancreas will release insulin that immediately starts working to lower the spike," she explains. "That large insulin dump after a high-carb meal can cause a quick drop in blood glucose, which can make you tired, jittery, anxious and craving more carbs for quick energy. Glucose that drops below 70 mg/dL is known as hypoglycemia. Walking soon after a meal, before the spike, prevents hypoglycemia and that rollercoaster-like pattern of spikes and dips that's unhealthy and leads to insulin resistance."

She notes that other research has come to similar conclusions: one found that people with diabetes who took brisk fifteen-minute walks shortly after eating achieved greater glucose reduction compared to those who took a single forty-five-minute walk before breakfast.

“In other words, syncing your activity with your meals — rather than exercising in one long session at another time of day — may offer more effective sugar control,” she says.

Can I Trust the Study?

A note on the study itself: it included just twelve healthy young adults as its study subjects — a small and narrow pool. I wanted to know: can we trust the findings? Dr. Comite says yes, or at least that the study is a good place to start.

“It’s a small, though well done, study as it compares each individual using every category, control (no walking), 10 minutes, and 30 minutes postprandially. Furthermore, their results are similar to other studies,” she says.

However, she offers an important caveat: that clinical trials of any size do not fully represent the enormous individual variability in glucose response. Plenty of personalized factors can sway results — namely, whether you are “prediabetic, taking medication, supplements, sedentary or a postmenopausal woman and andropausal man.” She suggests wearing a continuous glucose monitor (CGM), to see how walking after eating affects *you* specifically.

“You can actually conduct the study on yourself and see the benefit of walking after a high carb meal in real time on your smart phone. In all likelihood, you’ll start to see your glucose rise shortly after finishing eating, and that the rise levels off during and after you walk,” the doctor says.

How to Manage Your Blood Sugar

With the Help of Exercise

Dr. Comite has a few practical suggestions for people looking to manage their glucose levels. These in addition to any medication your doctor may have prescribed:

- Work toward maintaining optimal body composition through healthy diet and exercise
- Wear a continuous glucose monitor to understand and log your own glucose patterns
- Manage your sleep and stress levels (and note when these affect your glucose levels)
- Walk often and especially after you eat, whenever you can
- Incorporate 2-3 strength training sessions per week

This last one is important, and frequently overlooked, Dr. Comite suggests. “Muscle is your body’s largest reservoir of energy, and building it, especially in the glutes, quads, and back, significantly improves your body’s ability to clear glucose from the bloodstream,” the doctor explains. “The most robust diabetes prevention comes from combining aerobic exercise with resistance training and high intensity interval training (HIIT).”

She offers one caution: that exercising when sugar is very high or very low can be dangerous, so you should know your numbers before you head to the gym.

I, for one, will continue to walk long distances, with a large portion of that likely happening all at once (whenever I have the time for it). But I’ll also make a bigger effort to walk after I eat, and to push my muscles harder with the hand weights I too often ignore at home.

A Final Thought From Dr. Comite

There’s one message that Dr. Comite thinks many of us are missing: Sugar dysregulation is not just a diabetic’s problem; it’s everyone’s problem. Rather than waiting for a diagnosis, we should all be gathering the right data and taking preventative measures to stabilize our blood sugar levels now, before a bigger concern

arises.

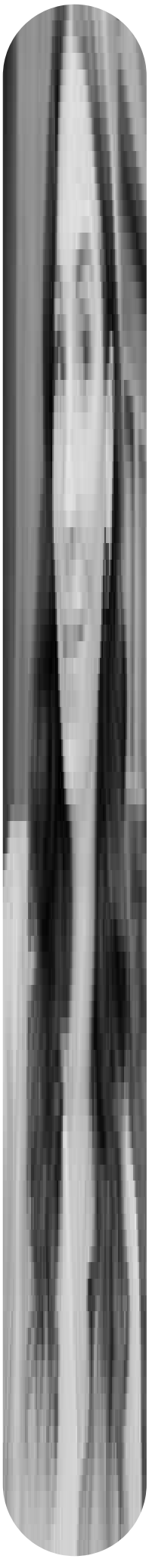
“I have yet to encounter a patient with truly optimal metabolism,” she tells Super Age. “Most people don’t even know they have a carbohydrate disorder because they’re not being tested properly. A fasting glucose of 95 might earn a ‘you’re in the normal range’ from your doctor, but optimal is 70–80 mg/dL. And fasting glucose alone doesn’t tell the full story — I recommend testing fasting glucose, fasting insulin, and hemoglobin A1c together.”

She adds that while a well-timed walk makes good health sense, it’s just one piece of the puzzle.

“A post-meal walk is a great tool, but sleep, stress management, and smart nutrition choices — like eating protein before carbohydrates, choosing lower-glycemic foods, minimizing processed and ultra processed foods all play a role. The most vital message: Your glucose is a window into your biological age and future health trajectory. Use the tools available to you, including wearables and over-the-counter CGMs, to understand and optimize before disease forces your hand.”

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