

Brown Rice Cuts Diabetes Risk

Editorial Staff

One easy way to be more healthy and cut the risk for diabetes is ask for brown rice instead of white rice the next time you order take-out from your favorite Chinese restaurant. Brown rice is the whole grain before it has been stripped of its bran outer layer, which is high in fiber and nutrients. Once that layer has been removed, the white rice that remains is mostly starch. Brown rice also has a lower glycemic index than white rice, so it does not raise blood sugar levels as rapidly.

Now, a recent study published in the *Archives of Internal Medicine* by a team of researchers from the Harvard School of Public Health shows one more reason why [brown rice is the healthier choice](#).¹ The researchers started by looking at questionnaire data from three large studies that asked participants about lifestyle practices, food choices and chronic diseases. The data from a total of 39,765 men and 57,463 women were analyzed. Participants were divided into several groups with regard to their rice intake. For white rice: Less than one serving (one cup cooked rice) per month, one to three servings per month, one serving per week, two to four servings per week and five or more servings per week. For brown rice: less than one serving per month, one to four servings per month and two or more servings per week. This dietary information was then correlated with incidence of type 2 diabetes.

The researchers found that those people who ate two or more servings of brown rice per week reduced their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by about 10 percent. Furthermore, those who ate more brown rice were also more likely to be physically active, leaner, and have a higher intake of fruits, vegetables and whole grains and a lower intake of red meat and trans fats. They were also less likely to have a family history of diabetes or to be smokers.

In comparison, those subjects who ate white rice five or more times per week were almost 20 percent more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than those who ate white rice less than once a month. In addition, they were more likely to have a family history of diabetes and to consume a lower amount of whole grains and fibers.

The researchers also found that by replacing one-third of a serving (one-third cup of cooked rice) of white rice with brown rice each day could reduce the risk for type 2 diabetes by 16 percent.

According to primary researcher Dr. Qi Sun, an instructor in medicine at Brigham and Women's Hospital, which is affiliated with Harvard Medical School, many food studies simply lump together brown and white. Sun added, "The bottom line is we showed evidence that increased consumption of white rice, even at this low level of intake, is still associated with increased risk. It's really recommended to replace white rice with the same amount of brown rice or other whole grains."

Reference

1. Sun Q, Spiegelman D, van Dam RM, et al. [White rice, brown rice, and risk of type 2 diabetes in US men and women](#). *Arch Intern Med* 2010 Jun 14;170(11):961-9.

