

Article 2: Should People with Diabetes Stop Eating Rice? Experts Bust the Myth

Many people have heard statements like, "I have diabetes, so I don't eat rice anymore."



Some people even switch completely to eating only **ragi (finger millet)** or **chapatis**. But is it really necessary for someone who has eaten rice all their life to stop eating it suddenly? And how much rice can a person with diabetes safely eat? This article addresses these common questions.

Gyaan by Ganesh - Making India Win Over Diabetes is an awareness initiative by Sun Pharma, in partnership with the American Diabetes Association, focused on helping Indians better understand, prevent, and manage diabetes through expert backed information.

Is Rice Really Harmful for People with Diabetes?

Rice has been the staple food of Indians for generations. Recently, however, there has been increasing discussion about the relationship between regular rice consumption and diabetes. Since rice has a relatively **high Glycaemic Index (GI)**, people trying to lose weight or those with diabetes or prediabetes are often advised to be cautious about eating it.

But according to many doctors and nutritionists, **the answer is not so simple**. No

single food causes diabetes on its own. Although rice can temporarily increase blood sugar levels, it is also one of the body's most important sources of carbohydrates. Therefore, **completely eliminating rice is not an appropriate solution** for preventing or managing diabetes. Diabetes develops due to many factors, including:

- Excess body weight
- Lack of physical activity
- Inadequate sleep
- Stress
- Genetics
- Overall unhealthy dietary habits
- Modern lifestyle

So, How Much Rice Can You Eat?

The real question is **not whether rice should be included in the diet**, but **how much and in what way it should be eaten**. Rice becomes problematic mainly when:

- It is eaten in large quantities.
- The diet is low in fiber.
- Physical activity is limited.

Eating large portions of rice without vegetables, protein, or regular exercise may contribute to:

- Weight gain
- Insulin resistance

However, **eating rice in moderation is not harmful**. Combining rice with:

- Lentils (dal)
- Vegetables
- Curd (yogurt)
- Salad

creates a balanced meal that helps:

- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Reduce the rise in blood sugar after meals.

Is Completely Avoiding Rice a Good Idea?

Not necessarily. Giving up rice completely may lead people to consume even more calories from other foods, such as:

- Refined flour products
- Fried foods

- Soft drinks
- Bakery products
- Highly processed foods marketed as "healthy"

Replacing rice with these foods may actually create a bigger health problem.

Therefore, maintaining a balanced meal containing a variety of nutrients is far more important than eliminating rice altogether.

Switch to Brown or Red Rice: Unlike highly polished white rice, brown and red varieties retain their fiber-rich bran layer, which naturally slows down glucose absorption.

Use the Diabetes Plate Method: Prevent rice from dominating your meal by dividing your plate into sections: fill 1/2 with non-starchy vegetables (like spinach or salad), 1/4 with protein (like lentils, paneer, or chicken), and limit the remaining 1/4 to your rice portion.

Eat Rice Last (Food Sequencing): Eat your vegetables and protein first, saving the rice for the end of the meal. This sequence ensures glucose enters your bloodstream slowly rather than a sudden flood.

Dr Sanjana Rai K, MBBS, MD (General Medicine), DM Endocrinology, Diabetes & Metabolism), Assistant Professor, Father Muller Medical College, Mangalore

What Really Helps Prevent Diabetes?

Doctors emphasize that diabetes prevention depends much more on healthy lifestyle habits than on avoiding rice. The most important factors include:

- Regular physical activity.
- Maintaining a healthy body weight.
- Getting adequate sleep.
- Managing stress effectively.

People who stay physically active and eat rice **in moderation** generally have a lower risk of developing diabetes. Those diagnosed with **prediabetes** or those with a strong family history of diabetes should undergo regular health check-ups and blood sugar testing.

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