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E. EXCEL'S WORLD



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E. Excel Is Part of Everyday Life—E. Excel Is Life

Diamond Master Sung Yueh-Cheng



Sung Yueh-Cheng

From: Taiwan
Strengths and Hobbies: Photography, video editing, aerial photography, diving
Dream: To travel the world with E. Excel
Traveled with E. Excel to: Royal Caribbean Cruise, Jeju Island

At an age when many are still searching for direction in life, newly promoted Diamond Master Sung Yueh-Cheng has already charted his own career path. For him, the E. Excel business was not a sudden choice, but a journey—from his initial exposure, to a deepening understanding, and eventually, after graduation, committing to a path he had long been familiar with. What began as a career has since become a natural extension of his life.

"I didn't really join E. Excel—I grew up in it," Yueh-Cheng said with a smile. From a young age, his daily life extended beyond home and school to include a space for learning and connection. "To me, E. Excel is not just a workplace, but a community built on meaningful connections, where long-time and new E. Excellers come together to share their lives and support one another."

Growing up in such an environment, Yueh-Cheng gradually developed a keen understanding of people. His studies in social work at university further deepened this ability. "The practical training in social work taught me to observe first, then reflect." This also nurtured a unique sense of awareness—the ability to look beyond the surface, understand the reasons behind things, and clearly define his own role and direction. In his view, real change often begins the moment one truly understands oneself.

The true turning point came around the time of his graduation. "As I watched my classmates enter traditional career paths, I kept asking myself, deep down, what I really wanted."

Compared with the structured path of a traditional career, Yueh-Cheng began to see something different in the business his mother had built over the years—one that offered continuous learning opportunities, a flexible schedule, exposure to people from diverse backgrounds, and the chance to explore the world and broaden his horizons. "This experience made me certain that at this stage of my life, in my twenties, what I wanted was not to try everything blindly, but to choose the right direction and commit to it over the long term." For Yueh-Cheng, this was not a spur-of-the-moment decision, but a deliberate and well-considered choice.

As a second-generation E. Excel business owner, Yueh-Cheng sees this not as pressure but as an advantage. "Watching my mother build this business as I grew up gave me a broader understanding of how it works. I didn't have to start from zero." He understands that success in an E. Excel business is not achieved overnight, but built steadily over time. Rather than focusing on speed, he values this starting point—less trial and error, but greater responsibility.

While building on the experience of those before him, Yueh-Cheng has also developed his own rhythm as part of the younger generation. He makes good use of digital tools to organize information and improve efficiency, and integrates E. Excel naturally into daily life through social media. "Rather than directly promoting products, I focus on weaving E. Excel into everyday living so that sharing feels natural." Together with his mother, he manages a LINE community, sharing content that ranges from health insights to business development and team engagement. Through themed sharing and food-related content, they bring the products closer to modern lifestyles.



Beyond making good use of tools, Yueh-Cheng also approaches learning like a sponge, constantly absorbing new knowledge and cultivating a proactive learning mindset. "The world is changing rapidly. When you're open to exploring different fields, your perspective naturally broadens." In addition to regularly attending E. Excel study group sessions, he actively explores knowledge in business, technology, and investment, while observing how different industries operate. He transforms these cross-disciplinary insights into fuel for his business, enabling him to sustain continuous growth in a rapidly changing world.

When it comes to leading a team, he shows a level of maturity beyond his years. "Many things aren't about right or wrong—just different perspectives." He believes in staying humble, listening to diverse voices, and seeing ideas from different generations as complementary strengths. "The innovation of the young, combined with the experience of those who came before, allows the team to move forward more steadily." To him, leadership is not about control, but about helping each person find their place.

As understanding turns into action, his role within the team has evolved from an observer to a core leader. "My greatest sense of achievement comes from seeing teammates start from zero and grow—not only in income, but also in their health and overall quality of life. That kind of change is truly real." This transformation has also become his motivation to keep going.

Despite reaching the rank of Diamond Master at such a young age, Yueh-Cheng does not see it as an endpoint, but rather as a reminder to take on greater responsibility. "This position represents the cumulative efforts of many who came before me. Success cannot be copied, but effort can be accumulated." Looking back on his journey from observer to leader, he understands more clearly that real progress takes time.

He firmly believes, "As long as the direction is right and you are willing to commit for the long term, time will gradually compound everything into greater value." With this conviction, as he stands at this new starting point as a Diamond Master, he sees not just personal achievement, but the potential for continued growth. "To me, E. Excel is not just a business—it is a place that carries dreams, health, and human connection." As more people find their place here, what may seem like ordinary daily life will, over time, accumulate and evolve into each person's unique life path.

Life Motto—"Every place you have been becomes a story, and everything you do becomes experience."

The Fairy Tale Fixes: Metabolism Hype



In the world of wellness, quick fixes are everywhere. "Boost your metabolism!" "Burn fat while you sleep!" These catchy promises show up on supplement bottles, social media posts, and late-night infomercials. But how much of it is backed by science—and how much is just clever marketing? It's time to take a closer look at the facts behind the hype and uncover what metabolism really needs to function at its best.

What Is Metabolism, Really?

Metabolism is the process your body uses to convert food into energy. This energy powers everything—from your heartbeat and breathing to cell repair and body temperature regulation. It runs constantly, whether you're sprinting, eating, or fast asleep.



When people talk about a "fast" or "slow" metabolism, they're usually referring to metabolic rate—the speed at which the body burns calories. A faster rate means more calories are burned even at rest, while a slower rate means fewer calories are burned, which can make weight management more challenging.

How Your Body Burns Energy

Metabolism isn't just one process; it has three parts. The largest share—about 60% to 70%—comes from your basal metabolic rate (BMR), the energy your body uses to perform basic functions like breathing and keeping your heart beating. About 10% comes from the thermic effect of food (TEF), which is the energy it takes to digest and absorb what you eat. The rest depends on physical activity, which can vary widely depending on how much you move each day.





What Affects Your Metabolism?

Your metabolism is influenced by many factors. Genetics sets the baseline—some people are simply born with faster or slower metabolic "engines."

Muscle mass also plays a big role, since muscle tissue burns more calories at rest than fat tissue. That's why strength training can help modestly increase your resting metabolism.

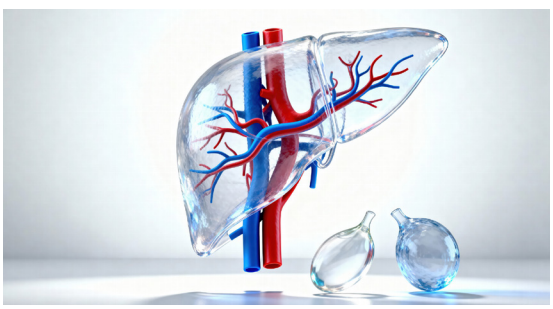
Hormones play a major role in metabolism. The thyroid gland, for example, releases hormones that control how fast your body burns energy. If it's underactive (hypothyroidism), metabolism slows down. If it's overactive (hyperthyroidism), metabolism speeds up.

Sleep and stress matter too. Chronic stress or too little sleep can disrupt hormone balance, which may increase appetite, promote fat storage, and contribute to muscle loss.

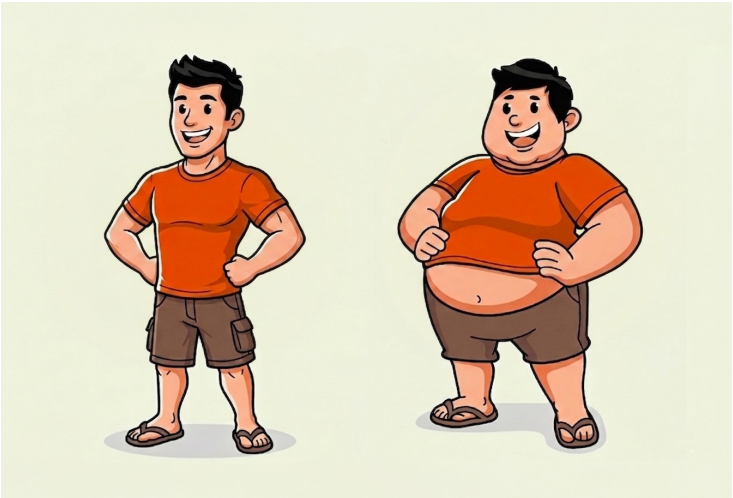
As we age, metabolism naturally slows. Muscle mass declines and we're often less active. The result is a drop in calorie needs. That's why you might have eaten two bowls of rice without gaining weight when you were younger, but the same meal now can lead to weight gain.

Your Organs and Metabolism

Metabolism isn't just about food and calories—it's a system powered by many organs. The liver processes nutrients and manages energy storage. The pancreas regulates blood sugar. Muscles burn calories even at rest. Fat tissue releases hormones that influence hunger and energy use. The thyroid sets the pace of your metabolic rate, while the brain, especially the hypothalamus, keeps everything coordinated.

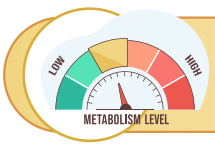


Fast Metabolism vs. Slow Metabolism



You've probably heard someone complain they gain weight despite barely eating, while another seems to eat anything and stay slim. It may feel unfair, but metabolism isn't fully within our control. Genetics plays a role, as do body size and activity level. Larger bodies burn more calories because more tissue—both muscle and fat—requires more energy to maintain. Smaller bodies need fewer calories, which is why weight loss lowers daily energy needs.

This also explains why weight loss slows over time: as body mass decreases, so does the energy required to maintain it. Loss of muscle during weight loss can reduce metabolism even further—unless strength training is included to help preserve muscle.



Bigger body = more calories burned
Smaller body = fewer calories needed





Children vs. Adults: Why Metabolism Changes

Children have higher metabolic rates because they're growing. Building bones, muscles, and organs takes constant energy. They're also more active, which increases calorie needs. A toddler may need 800 – 1,400 calories a day, while teens may need anywhere from 1,600 to over 3,000, depending on activity level.

As we age, cell turnover slows, and so does metabolism. Muscle mass declines, and activity often drops, leading to lower calorie needs. That's why adults can't eat the way they did as children without gaining weight.



Kids = higher metabolic rate + rapid cell replication → higher calorie needs
Aged adults = slower metabolic rate + reduced cell turnover → lower calorie needs



Why Losing Weight Gets Harder Over Time

Weight loss itself can slow metabolism. When the body senses a drop in calorie intake, it enters conservation mode—a survival mechanism known as adaptive thermogenesis. Your BMR slows to preserve energy, making further weight loss more difficult. If you lose muscle during weight loss, your metabolism slows even more.

That's why crash diets often backfire. They may lead to fast initial weight loss, but often at the cost of muscle mass and long-term metabolic health. Sustainable weight loss requires gradual changes and strength training to preserve muscle mass.

Calories Still Count

While metabolism influences how your body uses energy, the basic principle still holds: if you consistently eat more calories than you burn, you'll gain weight. If you eat fewer calories than your body needs, you'll lose weight. Even small daily differences add up. Skipping one dessert a week could help you lose nearly seven pounds (about 3 kg) in a year.

Metabolism matters—but it's only one piece of the puzzle. Movement, food choices, sleep, stress, and body composition all play a role. Instead of trying to "hack" your metabolism, the best approach is to support it with consistent, healthy habits that keep your whole body running smoothly.





Boosting Your Metabolism the Smart Way

There's no magic pill to speed up your metabolism—but your daily choices matter more than you think. Supporting a healthy metabolism means working with your body, not against it.

Don't skip meals.

Your metabolism thrives on consistency. Skipping meals can slow down your metabolic rate as your body tries to conserve energy. Instead, fuel it regularly with balanced, nutrient-rich but low-calorie foods.

Choose whole, plant-based foods.

Vegetables, fruits, and mushrooms provide essential nutrients and phytochemicals that support not just metabolism, but immune health too.

Prioritize plant-based proteins.
Plant-based proteins like soy provide all essential amino acids, are efficiently absorbed, and come without cholesterol. They also require more energy to digest—thanks to the thermic effect of food (TEF). Scientifically, about 20% – 30% of the calories from protein are used during digestion, compared with just 5% – 10% for carbohydrates and 0% – 3% for fats. This makes protein-rich meals naturally more metabolism-boosting.



Thermic Effect of Food (TEF)
Protein: ~20% – 30%
Carbohydrates: ~5% – 10%
Fats: ~0% – 3%

Increase dietary fiber intake.
Fiber supports healthy digestion and helps regulate appetite and blood sugar. Foods like whole grains, brown rice, and psyllium husk keep you fuller for longer and help stabilize energy levels—making it easier to stay active.

Stay hydrated.
Even mild dehydration can slow down your metabolism. Drink water regularly throughout the day to keep your body functioning efficiently. Green tea is a smart addition—its key compound, EGCG, has been shown to modestly boost fat oxidation and calorie burn, potentially increasing energy expenditure by about 100 calories a day with around three cups.

Move your body.
Regular physical activity is one of the most powerful metabolism boosters. Exercise helps build and maintain muscle—the most metabolically active tissue in your body.

Prioritize sleep and stress relief.
Skimping on sleep or living under constant stress can disrupt the hormones that regulate your metabolism, appetite, and fat storage. The fix? Get solid rest and find ways to unwind—whether it's laughing with friends, practicing mindfulness, or simply taking a break. Your body runs better when it's well-rested and less stressed.





Metabolism Isn't Fixed

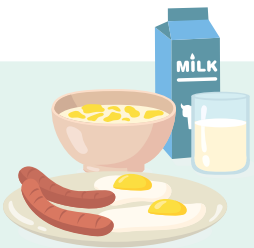
Genetics and age matter, but your daily choices still steer the ship. Skip the fads and shortcuts; the real path to lasting energy, a healthy weight, and overall vitality lies in understanding how your body works and making science-backed lifestyle changes—not chasing fairy tales.

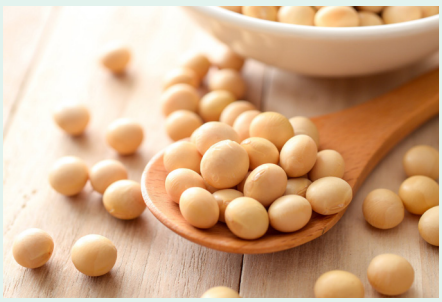
Speaking of fairy tales... let's bust some of the most common metabolism myths that just won't quit.



Myth:

Eating breakfast speeds up your metabolism.





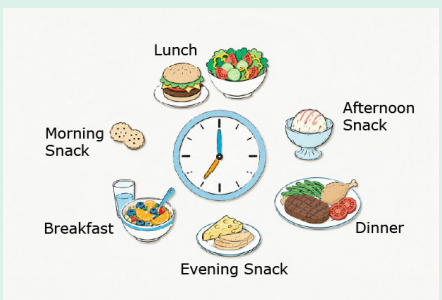
Truth:

Breakfast doesn't directly raise your metabolic rate, but it helps regulate appetite and stabilize blood sugar levels. As the first meal after an overnight fast—when your body needs quality nutrients—it's important to choose wisely. A breakfast rich in vegetables, fruits, fiber, and plant-based protein like soy, while avoiding high-fat or cholesterol-heavy options, can support immunity and promote a more balanced metabolism throughout the day.

Myth:

Eating six small meals a day boosts your metabolism.





Truth:

While your body does burn some calories digesting food, eating more often doesn't significantly speed up your metabolism. What really matters is your total calorie intake and the quality of your food choices. In fact, eating frequently can lead to weight gain if it causes you to consume more calories overall.

Myth:

Eating after a certain time (e.g., 7 PM) causes weight gain.



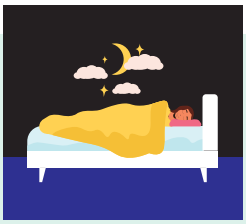


Truth:

Your metabolism doesn't shut down at night. No matter when you eat, it's your total daily calorie intake that matters—not the time on the clock. That said, late-night eating—especially when distracted, such as while watching TV—can lead to mindless snacking and excess calorie, which may contribute to weight gain over time.

Myth:

Sleep doesn't affect metabolism.





Truth:

Skimping on sleep throws your hormones that regulate hunger and energy out of whack—causing you to crave more, store more fat, and burn fewer calories. Over time, poor sleep can quietly slow your metabolism and make managing your weight feel like an uphill battle.

Myth:

Thin people always have faster metabolisms.





Truth:

Not necessarily. In fact, larger bodies usually burn more calories at rest because it takes more energy to maintain them. What really drives metabolism is muscle mass—not body size alone. A lean person with more muscle may burn more calories overall than someone heavier with less muscle.



Myth:

Aging kills your metabolism.



Truth:

Metabolism does slow with age, but the real issue is muscle loss. With less muscle, your body burns fewer calories at rest. The good news? Strength training can help maintain and even build muscle, keeping your metabolism active. It's never too late to start.



Myth:

You can't change your metabolism.



Truth:

Genetics influence your metabolic rate, but lifestyle matters just as much—if not more. You can support a healthier metabolism by building muscle, staying active, getting enough sleep, staying hydrated, and eating plenty of plant-based protein.



Myth:

You can "reset" your metabolism with a detox diet or fasting.



Truth:

There's no scientific evidence that "detox" diets or fasting can "reset" your metabolism. While they may cause short-term calorie reduction, extreme or prolonged fasting can actually slow your metabolic rate. Your body adapts to lower calorie intake by conserving energy—burning fewer calories to do the same tasks—which can make future weight loss harder and weight regain more likely.



Myth:

If you're not losing weight, you must have a slow metabolism.



Truth:

Most weight-loss plateaus happen because your body's needs have changed—maybe you're moving less, eating a bit more than you realize, or losing muscle. Your metabolism isn't "broken"; your body has simply adapted and may now burn fewer calories, making further weight loss harder. Instead of just cutting more calories, focus on strength training, more plant-based protein, and better sleep and stress management to keep progress sustainable.





The Lifelong Learning article is contributed by Dr. EE Zhang, MBChB.

Building a Brain That Gets Stronger



At E. Excel, we champion whole-person health: not only strong bodies fueled by plant wisdom, but also resilient, agile minds. In a world where we're living longer than ever before, mental fitness should be a daily practice.

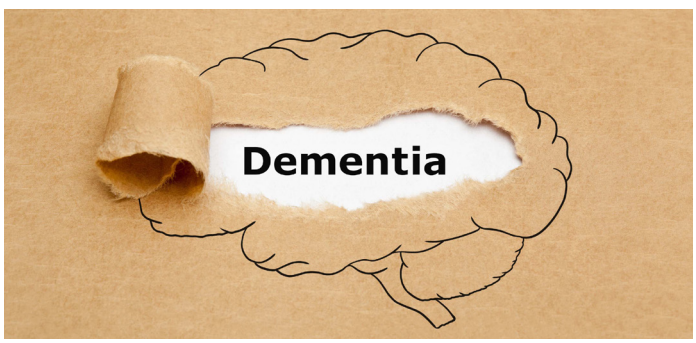
Our brains change gradually over time. Starting in our mid-30s, the brain begins to shrink by about 0.2% per year in volume. This shrinkage speeds up after age 60, and if we don't challenge our brains enough, it can happen even faster. By the time most people reach their 80s, nearly half will show some degree of memory decline.

The brain is like a muscle—the more we use it, the stronger it becomes. Just as we exercise to keep our bodies fit, we need to exercise our brains to keep them sharp. When we engage the brain through activities such as learning, teaching, traveling, solving problems, serving others, eating well, moving daily, and resting deeply, it grows more connected and more capable.

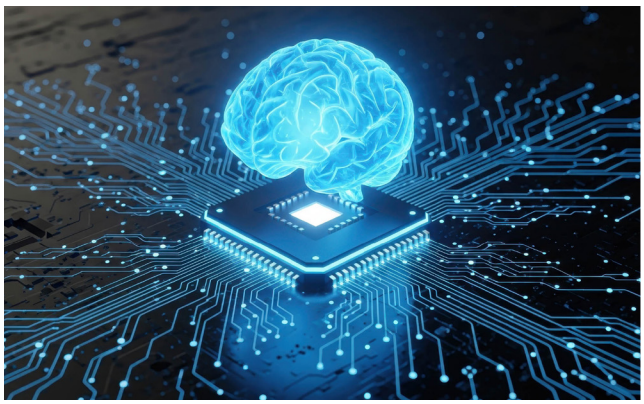
Life is too good not to remember; we must start training our brains now.

The Amazing, Adapting Brain

People often use "dementia" and "Alzheimer's" as if they mean the same thing, but they don't. Dementia is a general term for serious problems with memory and thinking that interfere with daily life, but it's not always life-threatening. Alzheimer's disease, on the other hand, damages brain cells, causes the brain to shrink, and accounts for about 60% – 70% of all dementia cases.



Unlike some other forms of dementia, Alzheimer's is progressive and life-threatening. While these conditions sound alarming, there's encouraging news—our brains are far from helpless. Keeping our minds active strengthens the connections between brain cells and may slow down memory decline.





The brain is often compared to a computer, but that metaphor undersells it. Computers wear out, and they don't rewire themselves. However, our brains do. They're living networks that can adapt, rewire, and even rebuild. Each time you study a concept, learn a skill, or discuss an idea, neurons—your brain's specialized cells—strengthen existing connections and form new ones. It's like sending messages through an intricate web, where information moves from one group of neurons to another. This neuroplasticity is how memories form, grow, and sometimes recover after injury. Over time, the weaving of new pathways changes both the structure and function of the brain in measurable ways.

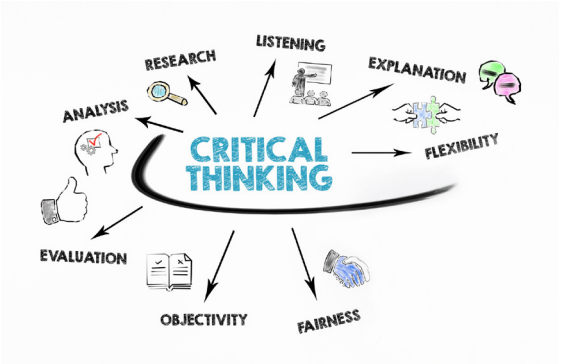
One of the most famous demonstrations comes from London taxi drivers who drive the city's iconic black cabs. To earn a license, they must master "the Knowledge of London": roughly 25,000 streets and thousands of landmarks. Brain-imaging research shows that this intense, multi-year mental training is associated with structural changes in the hippocampus—a brain region central to memory and spatial navigation. Compared with control groups, and even with London bus drivers who follow fixed routes, London taxi drivers exhibit greater gray matter volume in key hippocampal subregions—a striking sign of experience-driven plasticity.



Neuroplasticity is also why the brain can reorganize after injury. In dramatic cases (for example, in children who undergo a hemispherectomy—removal of one cerebral hemisphere to treat severe epilepsy), other neural networks in the remaining cerebral hemisphere compensate for lost tissue, allowing remarkable function and development. While outcomes vary, these cases highlight the brain's capacity to reassign tasks and build alternate routes for cognition—living proof that our neural systems are not brittle but resilient and trainable.

The brain is powerful and strengthens with use. Like a muscle, it responds to meaningful stressors: new learning, complex navigation, deliberate practice, rich conversation, critical thinking, teaching, and mentoring. These activities are the raw materials of brain growth, helping build a brain that can better withstand aging, stress, and disease.

Building Cognitive Reserve—Your Brain's Backup System



All that learning and mental activity adds up to something powerful called cognitive reserve. If neuroplasticity describes how the brain changes, cognitive reserve explains why some people function better than expected despite age-related brain changes or even pathology.

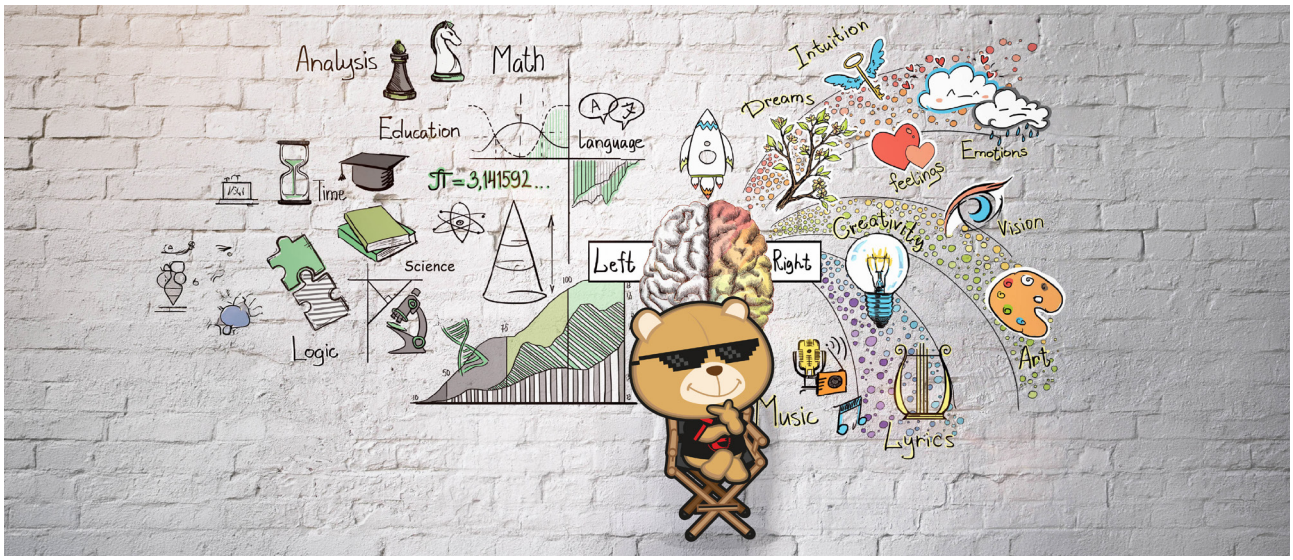
A person with high cognitive reserve is like a librarian with a vast, well-indexed catalog: when one book goes missing, they can find the information elsewhere. People with higher cognitive reserves have more ways to perform mental tasks because they can recruit alternative networks or strategies when the usual route is blocked. The result: the onset of cognitive decline symptoms may be delayed, even when underlying changes are present.

How do we build cognitive reserve? Through sustained, diverse mental engagement across life: education, reading, writing, problem-solving, complex work, language learning, music, travel, and rich social interaction. Extensive cohort studies from the Rush Memory and Aging Project suggest that those who remain highly cognitively active into later life can delay the onset of Alzheimer's by up to five years compared with those who are less engaged. That's five extra years of independence, contribution, and connection.



The "London taxi" evidence dovetails beautifully with this: when people take on demanding mental tasks—navigation, memory, decision-making under pressure—their brains physically adapt. A recent occupational analysis published in *The BMJ* found that taxi and ambulance drivers—jobs that require constant spatial mapping, route planning, and rapid problem-solving—had the lowest proportion of deaths attributed to Alzheimer's disease among hundreds of occupations. This kind of work may contribute to a protective cognitive reserve; notably, drivers with fixed routes (such as bus drivers) don't show the same hippocampal growth. While an observational design can't prove causation, the pattern aligns with the principle: dynamic mental challenge builds cognitive reserve.

The more varied the "books" in your cognitive reserve library—study, discussion, teaching, new skills, complex tasks, and social engagement—the more routes your brain can use to think, remember, and adapt to stay strong and resilient for life.



What Counts as Brain Exercise

Think in terms of active vs. passive engagement.

- **Active engagement** (such as study groups, reading and summarizing, teaching others, strategic business planning, learning a new language or musical instrument, traveling with intentional learning, leading meetings, or mentoring) recruits multiple brain systems at once: attention, memory, language, executive function, emotion, and social cognition. This is cognitive cross-training that builds your "neural network fitness."

- **Passive consumption** (for example, long stretches of TV watching) is cognitively less demanding. Several large cohort studies have linked greater television viewing with higher dementia risk. In contrast, more interactive computer use or problem-solving activities are associated with lower dementia risk, likely because they demand active processing rather than passive intake. Rest has its place, but passive screen time isn't an effective workout for your brain.

If it makes you think, explain, plan, create, or connect, it strengthens your brain.

The E. Excel Lifestyle: The Pillars of Brain Fitness

At E. Excel, we don't just talk about health—we live it. We help families thrive through Nutritional Immunology, lifestyle wisdom, and a supportive, values-driven community. Every step of the way, we keep our brains engaged and our hearts full.



E. Excel's Study Group: Community-Powered Neuroplasticity

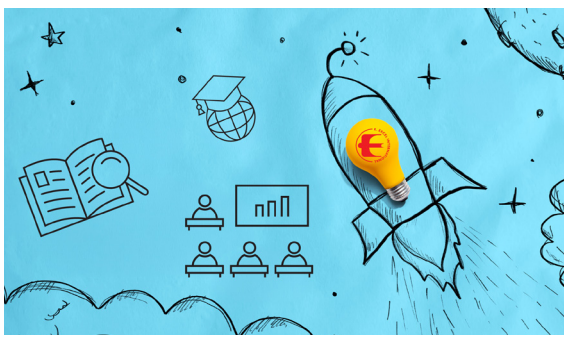
Our Study Group model is more than reading together; it's active learning with purpose. When you analyze articles, teach Nutritional Immunology concepts, discuss ideas, and field questions from customers and teammates, you activate precisely the systems that grow cognitive reserve: attention, memory, language, executive control, and social cognition.

Research shows that higher levels of late-life cognitive activity are associated with delaying Alzheimer's onset by up to five years. Social activity, too, is linked to a lower risk of dementia and mild cognitive impairment—reinforcing that learning together is more protective than learning alone. Other research has found that formal education correlates with lower dementia risk, and recent reviews confirm a likely causal relationship between education and cognitive outcomes.

Our Study Groups extend learning beyond school years, helping you continue building cognitive reserve at any age. When we host or join a Study Group, we invest in our brain's future. We invite our teammates, friends, family, neighbors—anyone we care about. Together, we grow, learn, question, and reflect.

Extra Brain Boost!

- Rotate facilitator roles so everyone teaches at times. (Teaching is the ultimate brain workout.)
- Assign each participant a topic (e.g., anthocyanins, beta-glucans, fiber) to share with the group.



Purpose With Impact

Meaning accelerates learning. When your work feels meaningful—when you know you're improving lives by helping families adopt plant-centered meals, make sense of health claims, and build resilient habits—your brain tags the learning as valuable. Purpose-driven work activates motivational and attentional systems that deepen memory encoding and recall.

At E. Excel, we are driven by a passion for education and empowerment. We study Nutritional Immunology not just to acquire knowledge, but to share it—helping others prevent disease and live healthier, fuller lives. When you explain Nutritional Immunology to a new team member or a customer, you're also rehearsing, retrieving, and refining the science—the exact mental processes that strengthen your neural pathways.

Purpose and meaning give our lives direction and fulfillment while keeping our minds sharp, our hearts inspired, and our brains young.



Extra Brain Boost!

- Make "teach-back" a norm: after each training, learners present the concept in their own words.
- Mentor a new teammate and lead Q&A sessions on topics such as adding more fiber to your diet.
- Connect your personal "why" to every action. Purpose isn't abstract—it's a neural amplifier.

Eat for the Brain and Body

Nutritional Immunology encourages a diverse, plant-forward diet rich in fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, nuts, grains, and legumes. These foods supply phytonutrients, antioxidants, and fiber that support vascular health, reduce inflammation, and feed a thriving gut microbiome—all vital to slowing brain aging.

Research shows that eating more plant-based foods is associated with slower cognitive decline and lower dementia risk. The cardiovascular benefits of plant-forward eating—such as lowering the risk of heart disease—also reduce the very dangers that harm the brain.



Extra Brain Boost!

- Start your day with a breakfast rich in fiber, vegetables, and plant protein.
- Limit animal products to reduce the burden on your body.

E. Excel's Incentive Trips: Travel That Trains the Brain

E. Excel's incentive trips are more than a reward—they're neuro-adventures. Travel stimulates the brain in ways routine rarely does. In unfamiliar places, our minds become more alert; attention networks "wake up" to scan, process, and encode new details, and our brains start building new associations. New sights, new foods, new places to sleep, new smells, new languages—each adds rich sensory and cognitive input that sparks curiosity and interest far beyond our usual patterns. That's also why we tend to remember time through events: salient experiences leave stronger memory traces, giving the brain more "hooks" to organize knowledge and, over time, encouraging growth through repeated learning and adaptation.

Extra Brain Boost!

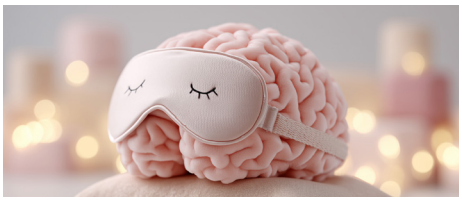
- In daily life, take a different route to the supermarket, try a new activity, meet new people, or eat at different restaurants. Novel experiences keep the brain active and growing.



Exercise Daily, Sleep Deeply

Exercise benefits the brain greatly. It fuels the growth of new brain cells, strengthens connections between them, and improves blood flow to keep the brain nourished and alert. Aerobic exercise improves the brain's key thinking skills—such as planning, focus, short-term memory, and mental flexibility. These benefits depend on the intensity and duration of the exercise. Even brisk walking can improve mood and focus. Make movement a daily ritual—take walking breaks, join step challenges, or stretch before Study Group—and watch the ripple effects on clarity, energy, and creativity.

Deep, consistent sleep is when your brain performs vital cleanup via the glymphatic system, clearing metabolic waste more efficiently than during waking hours. Skimping on sleep taxes attention, memory consolidation, and decision-making. Treat sleep as a non-negotiable part of your performance plan—your brain depends on it.



Family First: Balance Keeps the Brain Happy

Humans are wired for connection. Our brains thrive when we spend meaningful time with our loved ones. Frequent social activity is associated with a lower risk of dementia and mild cognitive impairment in later life, likely via richer cognitive stimulation, emotional regulation, and a stronger sense of purpose. One of the greatest gifts of being part of E. Excel is the flexibility to work at your own time, pace, and place. It lets you be present for family milestones and life's precious moments while staying engaged with a like-minded community—a formula that supports both mental health and mental performance.



Extra Brain Boost!

- Build regular connection rituals (e.g., Monday kickoffs, Friday Study Groups).
- Celebrate learning wins and life wins.

Today's Clarity, Tomorrow's Resilience

To live the E. Excel lifestyle is to choose empowerment: growth over stagnation, health over decline, and community over isolation. We live with energy, purpose, and a brain that gets stronger the more we use it.

As you train your brain, notice what unfolds: your recall sharpens, your mood stabilizes, your creativity flows, your teaching becomes more natural and persuasive, and your relationships deepen. That is cognitive reserve—built brick by brick, not for some distant future, but for today's clarity and tomorrow's resilience.



The Professional Development article is contributed by Elei Zhang, JD.

Knowledge is power. Knowledge is instrumental to value-creation and is a critical asset in life. It is in many ways the primary instrument of progress and innovation. However, knowledge can be messy, particularly when false. Today, information spreads rapidly and comprehensively, and websites and social media outlets are easy access points for false information.

We're here to help discern fact from fiction. Knowledge becomes powerful in the right culture—collectively sharing in the truth and continually seeking progress and ideas. Building the right knowledge base is neither a short-term effort nor a one-off project. It is a lifelong process of discovery.

Myth-Busting: Mane Edition



Your hair has heard a lot of gossip over the years. From your grandma's well-meaning advice to beauty TikToks and shampoo ads, it is no wonder your poor scalp is confused. Let us comb through (pun fully intended) the myths we have been told—and the facts that truly matter when it comes to hair and scalp health.



Myth:

Shampoo makes you lose hair.



Truth:

Not true. The hair you see on the shower drain cover is not caused by shampoo—it is hair that was already shedding. On average, we naturally lose about 50 to 100 strands a day. What causes hair loss? Factors like inflammation from scalp infections, buildup of oil and hair products, hormonal changes (such as after childbirth or during menopause), and certain medications. In fact, not washing your hair often enough can make things worse by allowing buildup to irritate your scalp. So, do not blame the shampoo—it is simply doing its job.



Myth:

The more you brush, the healthier your hair.



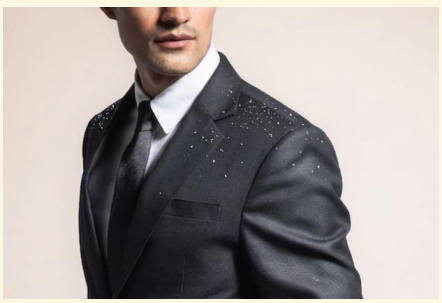
Truth:

The old advice to brush your hair "100 strokes a night" leads to breakage, not beauty. While gentle brushing helps detangle and distribute natural oils, excessive brushing can damage hair cuticles and cause split ends. Be gentle with your strands.



Myth:

Dandruff means your scalp is dry.



Truth:

Dandruff is not caused by dryness. On the contrary, it is often the result of an oily scalp. Excess oil creates an ideal environment for a yeast-like fungus called *Malassezia* to thrive. This fungus can irritate the scalp and speed up skin cell turnover, leading to flaking. Oiling the scalp will not help—and may even make things worse. The best fix? Use an anti-dandruff shampoo.



Myth:

Sudsy shampoos clean better.



Truth:

Bubbles do not mean a better clean. That rich lather comes from surfactants—foaming agents that make shampoo feel luxurious and more concentrated. But all those bubbles can strip away your scalp's natural oils and fade color-treated hair. If your hair color keeps disappearing faster than your last paycheck, your super-sudsy shampoo might be the culprit.



Myth:

Air drying is better than blow drying.



Truth:

It depends. Hair is at its weakest when wet and leaving it to air-dry for too long—especially in a cold or damp environment—can cause the hair shaft to swell and weaken. In fact, controlled blow drying on a low heat setting may actually be less damaging than letting hair stay soaking wet for extended periods.



Myth:

Oily hair does not need conditioner.



Truth:

Conditioner is formulated to moisturize and protect the hair shaft. Even oily hair needs hydration—especially at the ends, which are older and more prone to damage. Conditioner also helps detangle hair after shampooing, making it easier to manage. For most people, applying conditioner from the mid-lengths to the ends helps prevent the roots from becoming weighed down. Be sure to rinse thoroughly.



Myth:

You should not wash your hair too often.

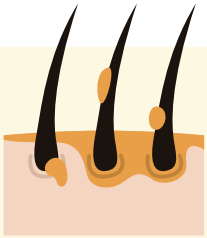


Truth:

There is no universal rule—it depends on your scalp type, lifestyle, and hair texture. Some worry that frequent washing will dry out their hair or cause it to fall out, but skipping washes can backfire. A scalp clogged with oil, sweat, and dead skin can lead to irritation, inflammation, and even hair fallout over time. If you have an oily scalp, exercise regularly, or live in a humid climate, you may need to wash more often. Dry or curly hair types can usually go longer between washes. The key is to find a routine that keeps your scalp clean without over-stripping its natural oils.

Myth:

Conditioner clogs scalp pores and causes hair loss.





Truth:

A well-formulated conditioner will not clog pores on the scalp or cause hair loss, so yes—you can apply it to the scalp. Hair and scalp buildup is usually caused by infrequent washing, excess oil, or styling products—not conditioner itself. That said, if a conditioner is very rich or not rinsed thoroughly, it can contribute to residue over time. Conditioner is typically applied from the mid-lengths to the ends to avoid weighing down the roots—not because it is harmful to the scalp.

Myth:

Towel-drying your hair is safe.





Truth:

Only if you do it gently. Rubbing your hair with a regular towel creates friction that can rough up the cuticle, leading to breakage and frizz. Instead, gently blot or squeeze out excess water using a soft towel. It is much kinder to your strands—and helps keep the frizz monster at bay.

Myth:

Rinsing with cold water makes hair shinier.





Truth:

Some believe that rinsing hair with cold water flattens the hair cuticle, creating a smoother, shinier appearance. While a cold rinse might feel refreshing, it does not flatten the cuticle or "lock in" shine. Hair is composed of non-living keratin, so it does not respond dramatically to temperature changes. True shine comes from proper conditioning and avoiding excessive heat or chemical damage—not from a chilly final rinse.

Myth:

Protein hair products help your hair grow.





Truth:

Hair growth occurs inside the follicle, beneath the scalp—not on the surface. Hair is technically "dead," so no topical product can make it grow faster. Protein treatments can help damaged strands look smoother and feel stronger, but they do not stimulate the roots. Treating or nourishing the hair shaft—the visible part of the hair—cannot revive or speed up growth, as protein cannot travel through dead cells to trigger growth. What truly supports healthy hair growth? A clean, healthy scalp, balanced nutrition, and overall good health.

Myth:

You can repair split ends.





Truth:

Once a hair strand splits, the damage is irreversible—no product can magically glue it back together. Some treatments can temporarily smooth frayed ends and make them look better, but the only real fix is to trim them off.

Myth:

Ammonia-free hair dyes are better for your hair.





Truth:

Not necessarily. The strong ammonia smell often makes people assume it is more damaging than "ammonia-free" options—but that is not always true. Ammonia evaporates quickly (hence the sharp scent), whereas many ammonia-free hair dyes use monoethanolamine (MEA) instead. MEA has little to no odor, but it lingers on the hair and can build up over time. With repeated use, that buildup may lead to more dryness and damage than traditional ammonia-based formulas.



Myth:

Hair grows faster if you cut it more often.



Truth:

Trimming your hair does not make it grow faster—hair grows from the roots, not the ends. Since hair is made of dead cells, cutting it does not send any signals to the hair root (signals cannot travel through dead strands). What trims *do* help with is preventing split ends from creeping up the shaft, keeping your hair looking healthier and reducing breakage.



Myth:

Shaving a baby's head makes their hair grow back thicker.



Truth:

Shaving does not affect hair thickness, texture or growth speed. Hair grows from follicles beneath the scalp, and shaving only cuts it at the surface—it does not change what happens underneath. The stubbly regrowth may feel thicker at first, but that is only because blunt ends can seem coarser. A child's natural hair texture is determined by genetics—not baby buzz cuts. So, skip the shave and keep their hair for cuter pictures!



Myth:

Plucking gray hair will make more grow back.



Truth:

Plucking a gray hair will not cause more to appear. Each hair follicle produces only one strand, so removing a single gray hair will not suddenly trigger more to grow. However, repeatedly plucking hair from the same follicle can damage it, and over time, the follicle may stop producing hair altogether. In the end, plucking might leave you with less hair—gray or not—not more.

Good things come in pairs. So here's another Beyond article. Enjoy!

Carbohydrates: Friend or Foe?



Many of us treat carbohydrates as if they're public enemy number one. They raise blood sugar levels, so the conclusion feels simple: bad food. Case closed. On to the next social media post.

We live in a world of fast scrolling, short videos, and one-sentence health advice. A TikTok here. A Xiaohongshu (RedNote) post there. A ChatGPT answer in between. Everyone wants the "truth" in ten words or less. But your body isn't a headline, and health isn't a caption.

When it comes to nutrition, quick answers often lead to quick misunderstandings. So let's slow down for a moment. Blaming carbohydrates for high blood sugar levels is a bit like blaming water for a flooded kitchen.

If your sink overflows, is water the villain? It may seem like it at first, since it's the most obvious, but it's not the real problem. The real issue is the drain. If it's clear, water flows exactly where it should. If it's clogged, even clean water becomes a problem.

Carbohydrates work in a similar way. They're not the enemy. In fact, they're an essential part of a healthy diet, and our bodies rely on them for energy. So instead of rushing to judge them, it helps to first understand what they actually are.

What Exactly Is a Carbohydrate?

"Carbohydrate" is not just one single thing. It's more like a category. Think of it like the word "vehicle." Cars, buses, bikes, and trains are all vehicles. They look different and move in different ways, but they all belong to the same category.





Carbohydrates work the same way. There are three main members of the carbohydrate family: starches (often called complex carbohydrates), fiber (both soluble and insoluble), and sugars. So when we say "carbohydrates," we're actually talking about all three of these together.

Carbohydrates are also the body's preferred and most efficient source of energy. You can think of your body like a car. Protein helps build and repair the parts. Fat acts like a backup fuel tank. Carbohydrates are the gasoline that keeps everything running. For many people, a significant portion of daily energy comes from carbohydrates.



Carbohydrates = starches, sugars, and fiber

They are the body's preferred and most efficient fuel.

Most plant foods are built around carbohydrates. Many vegetables contain carbohydrates, mainly in the form of fiber and, in some cases, starch. Fruits are also carbohydrates, but they tend to contain more fiber and natural sugars. Mushrooms are a little different. Compared with fruits and vegetables, they contain slightly more protein, but they still provide carbohydrates.

So if you eat plants, you're eating carbohydrates. And that's not a mistake. That's exactly how nature designed food, because our bodies are designed to use them.

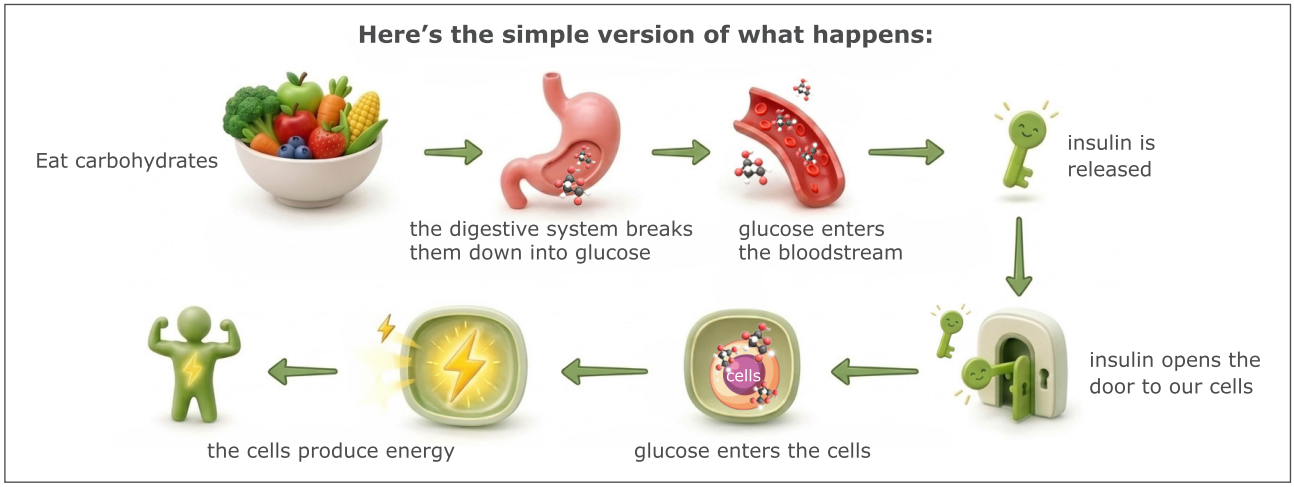
How Carbohydrates Become Energy

Carbohydrates and protein are macronutrients. That simply means our bodies need them in large amounts. When we eat carbohydrates, the body breaks them down into glucose, also known as blood sugar. Glucose is a primary source of energy for the body. Not evil. Not unhealthy. Just energy.



Eating plants = eating carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are broken down into sugars.
Glucose is the primary source of energy for the body's cells.



Think of it like a delivery system. Carbohydrates are large packages that are broken down into smaller parcels (glucose) before delivery. The bloodstream is the highway. Your cells are the houses. Insulin is the intercom that signals the door to open. When everything runs smoothly, the parcels are delivered into the houses, where they're needed to produce energy.

If there's more glucose than the body needs right away, it stores the extra. First, the body stores it in the liver and muscles, like filling a small pantry and refrigerator. When those are full, the extra is stored as fat, like sending extra parcels to a storage unit.

None of this is a mistake. This is simply normal human biology. Problems only begin when the delivery system stops working well.



The brain uses more glucose than any other organ.
When glucose levels are too low, cognitive function suffers.
When levels are too high, brain function can also be affected. Balance is key.

When the Delivery System Struggles

Remember the flooded kitchen example? Water isn't the problem. A clogged drain is. Blood sugar works in a similar way.



Carbohydrates turn into glucose. That glucose enters the bloodstream. Insulin's job is to allow that glucose to enter your cells. When homeostasis works well, blood sugar levels rise a little after eating and then gradually come back down. No drama.

But over time, some people's cells stop responding to insulin effectively. The intercoms don't work anymore. This is called insulin resistance.

Imagine trying to deliver parcels to houses where the doors are stuck shut. The intercom just isn't working. The parcels (glucose) arrive. But they can't get inside because the doors won't open.

So the parcels pile up outside. In the body, that means glucose stays in the bloodstream and blood sugar levels rise—not because carbohydrates suddenly became evil, but because the doors stopped opening properly to let glucose out of the bloodstream into the cells. This is how many people slowly move toward type 2 diabetes.

The problem isn't the parcels. The problem is the broken intercom.

For someone with diabetes or insulin resistance, managing carbohydrates becomes important, just like someone with a clogged drain must be more careful about how much water goes down the sink. But that doesn't mean water is poison. And it doesn't mean carbohydrates are poison.

It means the body's regulatory system needs attention. Don't demonize the fuel.



Sucrose, lactose, fructose, galactose, and maltose are all processed by the body to provide energy, often in the form of glucose.





All Carbohydrates Are Not the Same

Even though all carbohydrates belong to the same family, they don't behave the same way in your body.

Some carbohydrates break down into glucose fast. Some break down slowly. Some barely break down at all. That's where fiber changes the whole story.

Fiber is a type of carbohydrate that your body cannot fully digest. Instead of quickly turning into glucose, fiber acts more like a traffic controller. It slows the flow of parcels entering the roads. Deliveries become steadier and more staggered. Traffic moves more smoothly, and buildings receive parcels at a manageable pace.

When fiber is present, glucose enters the bloodstream more slowly. Blood sugar levels rise more gently. You feel full longer. Digestion works better.

That's why whole plant foods, such as vegetables, fruits, beans, and whole grains, behave very differently from refined foods like white bread, candy, and sugary soft drinks. They all contain carbohydrates. But they do not act the same because the delivery speed is different.

So the real question isn't, "Should I avoid carbohydrates?" A better question is, "Am I choosing carbohydrates that come with fiber and real food structure?" Because fiber helps the delivery system run better. Don't demonize the fuel, but work on fixing the system.

A Word About Keto and Very Low-Carbohydrate Diets

You may have heard claims like: "Keto works." "Keto melts fat." "Keto controls blood sugar levels."



Keto (short for "ketogenic diet") is a way of eating that is very low in carbohydrates and high in fat, so your body burns fat for energy instead of sugar.

For some people, keto does lead to weight loss. Diets very high in fat and protein tend to make people feel full longer. As a result, many people naturally eat fewer calories without trying. When calorie intake drops, the body weight decreases.

Very low carbohydrate intake can also reduce immediate rises in blood sugar levels after meals. For someone concerned about blood sugar, this can make keto seem like an obvious solution.

But weight loss and lower blood sugar levels aren't the same as long-term health.

It's possible to lose weight or improve certain numbers on a lab test while still moving toward poorer health overall. Think of it like turning off a warning light in your car. The light disappears, but the underlying issue may still be there.

Some studies have shown that certain versions of ketogenic or very low-carbohydrate diets—especially those high in saturated fats and low in plant foods—may be associated with higher LDL ("bad") cholesterol levels, reduced gut microbiome diversity, and potential long-term health risks.

Fiber is one of the most protective nutrients in the human diet. Yet ketogenic diets typically provide very little of it, since foods like meat and fats contain virtually no fiber.

In other words, very low-carbohydrate eating can sometimes manage symptoms for a while. But managing symptoms is not the same as fixing the underlying issue.



True health isn't just about lowering blood sugar levels. It's about supporting the whole body, including the heart, blood vessels, gut, liver, hormones, and immune system.

Health comes first. Not just weight. Not just blood sugar levels.

A healthy body still needs real, fiber-rich carbohydrates.

Simple vs. Complex Carbohydrates

The difference between simple and complex carbohydrates isn't about being "good" or "bad." It's mostly about speed.

Think of building a campfire. If you throw a sheet of paper into the fire, it flares up quickly and burns out just as fast. If you add a thick log, it burns slowly and steadily for a long time.

Both are fuel. They just release energy at very different speeds.



Simple carbohydrates are like paper in the fire. They break down quickly, so glucose enters the bloodstream fast and blood sugar levels rise rapidly. This usually happens because these foods contain very little fiber, protein, or natural structure to slow digestion. Examples include soft drinks, candy, white bread, and pastries.



Complex carbohydrates are more like logs on the fire. They take longer to break down, which means glucose enters the bloodstream gradually and blood sugar levels rise more gently. These foods come packaged with fiber and natural food structure that slows digestion. Examples include vegetables, whole fruits, beans, and whole grains.

So are simple carbohydrates "bad"? Not exactly. Simple carbohydrates are not poisonous. They simply affect blood sugar in a different way than fiber-rich complex carbohydrates do. They're useful for a quick refuel, but they're not ideal as the main source of fuel.

A helpful rule of thumb is to build most meals around complex, fiber-rich carbohydrates. Simple carbohydrates can still be enjoyed occasionally and mindfully.

No food needs to be demonized. But in a healthy diet, some foods should be regular guests at the table, while others are better saved for once-in-a-while visits.



The body needs glucose to survive. But foods like soda and donuts deliver excess sugar with little fiber or other beneficial nutrients, contributing to obesity and other health problems.

Carbohydrates Are Energy, Not the Enemy

Carbohydrates and sugar are not evil. They're simply sources of energy. So how do we apply this in daily life?

No chemistry degree required. No extreme diets. Just a simple pattern.



Most of our carbohydrates should come from whole plant foods that naturally contain fiber. That includes vegetables, fruits, beans, and legumes (such as lentils, black beans, and soybeans), whole grains, and some starchy foods like sweet potatoes, corn, oats, barley, and brown rice.

Foods like bread and pasta are not automatically unhealthy either. The key difference is whether they're whole or refined. Whole-wheat bread and whole-grain pasta still contain fiber and natural food structure, so they behave very differently in the body compared with refined white flour products.

Often, the problem isn't the carbohydrate itself, but what comes with it, such as large amounts of butter, oil, cream, cheese, heavy sauces, and oversized portions.

When carbohydrates are eaten in their whole form, they come packaged with fiber, water, and natural structure. It's nature's built-in safety system.

Instead of asking, "Is this food low-carb?" we can ask better questions:
"Did this food grow from the ground?"
"Is it mostly whole?"

If the answer is yes, we're probably on the right track.

Carbohydrates aren't the villain. Sugar isn't the villain. Broken systems, chronic stress, and diets low in fiber and phytonutrients are a much bigger part of the story.



So instead of blaming our fuel, we can focus on supporting our body. Health isn't about eating less. It's about eating smarter and choosing whole foods and filling our plates with more fiber-rich, colorful plant foods each day.



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