

**“Broccoli, Cauliflower, Asparagus, Zucchini OH MY! Veggies Veggies Everywhere  
Or  
Fluffy Want a Carrot?”**

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Q: I have a dog with diabetes, and I've heard giving vegetables is a good thing. Is this true?

A: Sugar diabetes, or diabetes mellitus, as it is called, is a very complex chronic disease to manage and treat successfully. The most important factor to modify other than the administration of insulin itself is to change the diet. The disease as it affects our pets has many causal factors including genetics. One of the main reasons for the development of diabetes is an imbalance of nutrition, and an excess of calories-mainly carbohydrates. Some of the same factors associated with diabetes in people apply also to our pets. The list starts with obesity (overweight), lack of exercise, an excess amount of complex carbohydrates (sugars) in the diet, higher levels of blood fats (cholesterol), accumulation of too much fat in the liver (fatty liver syndrome), and another major factor in the cause of diabetes is pancreas damage from repeated bouts of inflammation. The pancreas is an organ nestled right next to the stomach, and the first part of the smaller intestine (duodenum). It secretes enzymes which assist in the digestion of proteins, fats and carbohydrates. It also is the site where the insulin production takes place. The insulin is needed to allow the cells to be able to take in blood glucose (sugar). Without enough insulin, the cells of the body literally starve, unable to metabolize and use glucose for energy. The blood sugar level rises as the glucose has nowhere to go (hyperglycemia), and gets trapped in the bloodstream. It is unable to get to the tissues without the needed insulin. This high blood sugar further concentrates the blood causing an increased thirst which helps dilute the blood by stimulating drinking of water. Eventually needing to get rid of this excess water, the body's urine output goes up, and the urine is loaded with excess sugar. This is the true definition of diabetes mellitus (sugar in the excessive urine). The dog has to go out to urinate more often or even leaks on the floor being unable to hold the flow, or in cats the litter pan is much wetter than ever before.

In the days before we began to feed low quality commercial overcooked canned and dry food to pets (early 60's) we had much less diabetes to diagnose, let alone treat. We fed our pets off the table. Foods were more wholesome, organically grown, unprocessed, and farm fresh. Their diet consisted of meat, bones, eggs, milk and other dairy products, some animal or plant derived oils, and a greater or lesser amount of fresh vegetables depending on whether they were a dog or cat. Those same foods if fed more often today would greatly reduce the epidemic of diabetes that we have today. Recently there has been the advent of several commercially prepared prescription foods available from your veterinarian to help in the treatment of diabetic animals. Dr. Doug prefers to slowly

reduce the amount of the old diet fed, and start adding lean meats with vegetables, and very little to zero added starches or grains. The vegetables should be fresh, not frozen or canned. They should be served raw or occasionally steamed, but never micro-waved (no food should be heated in a microwave oven). The veggies should be grated or chopped very finely till all the pieces are quite small. A cat and small dog should get 1-2 teaspoons per day, a medium dog about a quarter cup, and large dog ½ -1 cup of chopped vegetables per day. When introducing them we should add them slowly and build up to the recommended amount over a few weeks. A diabetic should always have extra digestive enzymes added to each meal. For animals that just don't like veggies at first, you can use bran or psyllium fiber powder (1/2 tsp for cats and 1-3 tsp for dogs). The bran can be from wheat, corn, or oats. The fibers in bran powders or vegetables help to remove excess fats from the body, and eliminate toxic waste in the bowel. Fresh veggies have so many nutrients in them. They are rich in the antioxidant vitamins A and C. The plant pigments and other factors reduce inflammation, aid metabolism, and detoxifies, which helps the body to lower excessive blood sugars in a more natural way.

This changeover process can take a few months, but it is worth the effort as so many positive improvements can happen. If the pet is overweight a weight loss program should be incorporated into the treatment protocol. The use of fresh vegetables greatly improves and enhances weight loss. More often than not newly diagnosed diabetic pets have already lost too much weight, but were overweight before they became ill.

Any kind of vegetable can be used. Avoid corn, most salad type veggies, and the nightshade family. Cats adore asparagus, and that is what I start most cats on first. For dogs carrots and broccoli are typically our first choices. Editors note: YES carrots are good for diabetes!!!!