

Diabetics do not need special wine or sparkling wine

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The basic principle of a diabetic's diet was for many years a strict ban on sugar. As a consequence foods were produced which were said to be especially suitable for diabetics that contained less sugar or sugar substitutes. According to more recent scientific findings this nutritional "ban" is no longer justified. The dietary recommendations for the prevention and treatment of diabetes are very similar to those for the general population.

Diabetes is not just a "sugar disease", i.e. a disease of carbohydrate metabolism but also leads to disruptions of protein and fat metabolism. Hence, the treatment of diabetes aims to achieve normal blood sugar values as well as optimised blood fat values, normal blood pressure and normal weight. These aspects can be positively influenced by specific dietary measures. They include eating large amounts of foods which are rich in dietary fibre and vitamins. Fruit, vegetables and salads as well as pulses and whole grain products should be eaten daily. The consumption of fatty types of sausage and cheese should be avoided. As should chocolate, cake, pastries and crisps. Dairy products should be low fat and oils should be used instead of solid, animal fats like butter for cooking. At the same time, the amount of cooking salt in the daily diet should be limited, overly large meals avoided and alcohol drunk in moderation. The most important preventive measure is exercise every day coupled with a healthy, low calorie diet. Foods that are specifically tailored to the needs of diabetics and carry the wording "suitable for diabetics" are thus superfluous.

The same applies to luxury goods like beer, wine and sparkling wine that also carry claims of being suitable for diabetics. At the end of the fermentation process sugar amongst other things is added to these foods. In the case of products which claim to be "suitable for diabetics", fructose is used, a fruit sugar which is found in honey and fruit. Its sweetening strength is around 20% higher than that of conventional sugar and it is supposed to be more suitable for diabetics.

BfR examined whether fructose is indeed more digestible or tolerable for diabetics than ordinary sugar. The Institute comes to the conclusion that fructose does not have any significant advantages and its use is not to be recommended. Hence the Institute believes that the claim on foods of "suitable for diabetics" is superfluous. Diabetics should give preference to wines described as "dry" or "extra dry" and sparkling wines. The sugar concentration in these products only plays a subordinate role for diabetics when consumed in moderation and is not significant in an everyday diet.

The full version of this BfR Opinion is available in German on http://www.bfr.bund.de/cm/208/diabetiker_brauchen_keinen_speziellen_wein_oder_schaumwein.pdf