

UNIVERSAL GUIDE · FREE RESOURCE

The food *villain* checklist

A calm, plain-English audit of the everyday foods most often linked to blood sugar swings — plus simple, honest swaps worth trying.



How to use this checklist

Read each section. Tick anything you eat regularly — be honest. At the end, you'll see which category needs the most attention.

You don't have to eliminate anything. Two or three small swaps usually shift the dial more than dramatic restriction. Restriction tends to fail; gentle substitution tends to last.

Morning villains

The breakfast choices most often linked to early-day glucose swings.

- **Sugary cereals** — corn flakes, frosted varieties, sweetened granola. Often 20–30g of sugar per bowl, paired with refined carbs.
- **Pastries & muffins** — croissants, danishes, blueberry muffins. Refined flour plus sugar, often 40–60g of carbohydrate.
- **Fruit juice** — orange, apple, cranberry. Liquid sugar without the fibre that whole fruit provides.
- **Flavoured yogurts** — strawberry, vanilla, "light" varieties. Often 20–30g of added sugar despite the healthy reputation.
- **Instant flavoured oatmeal** — pre-sweetened packets. The oats are processed enough that the glycaemic effect is closer to refined cereal than steel-cut oats.

Calmer alternatives:

Steel-cut oats with nuts and cinnamon · 2 eggs with whole-grain toast · Whole fruit instead of juice · Plain Greek yogurt with fresh berries · Overnight oats with chia seeds and nuts.

Snack villains

The mid-morning and mid-afternoon choices most often linked to energy crashes.

■ **Crackers** (saltines, wheat thins, rice cakes) — refined carbs that behave like sugar in the bloodstream.

■ **Most commercial granola bars** — often closer to candy bars than health food. Read the sugar content.

■ **Pretzels** — pure refined carb without protein or fat to slow absorption.

■ **Dried fruit** (raisins, dates, banana chips) — concentrated sugar in small volumes. A quarter cup of raisins contains around 29g of sugar.

■ **"Low-fat" snacks** — cookies, chips, crackers marketed as healthy. Fat is usually replaced with sugar to maintain flavour.

Calmer alternatives:

Apple slices with almond butter · A handful of nuts with a small piece of dark chocolate · Hummus with cucumber · Berries with a few walnuts · Cheese with olives.

Meal villains

The lunch and dinner choices that often produce the biggest glucose excursions.

- **White rice** (jasmine, basmati, instant) — high glycaemic index. Behaves more like sugar than people realise.
- **White bread** (sandwich bread, rolls, bagels) — refined flour stripped of fibre.
- **Regular pasta** — sustained elevated glucose for hours. Restaurant servings are often 3–4× a recommended portion.
- **French fries** — refined carbs combined with seed oils, often coated in sugary seasonings.
- **Pizza, especially thick-crust** — refined flour, sugar in the sauce, easy to over-portion.

Calmer alternatives:

Cauliflower rice or quinoa instead of white rice · Lettuce wraps or sprouted-grain bread · Zucchini or shirataki noodles · Roasted sweet potato wedges · Cauliflower-base or portobello pizza.

Drink villains

Liquid sugars hit the bloodstream faster than solid food. This category catches more people than any other.

- **Regular soda** — around 39g of sugar per 12 oz can. Reaches the bloodstream within 10–15 minutes.
- **Sports drinks** — Gatorade, Powerade. Usually only justified for extended intense exercise.
- **Energy drinks** — sugar plus caffeine. Spike, then crash, often worse than the original tiredness.
- **Fancy coffee drinks** — frappuccinos, flavoured lattes. Often 30–60g of sugar in a large drink.
- **Store-bought smoothies** — sometimes 40–80g of sugar, even ones marketed as healthy.

Calmer alternatives:

Sparkling water with lemon · Water with electrolyte tablets (sugar-free) · Green tea or black coffee · Coffee with unsweetened almond milk and cinnamon · Homemade smoothies with protein and vegetables.

Hidden villains — foods that look healthy

The trickiest category. These have a "healthy" reputation but tell a different story on the label.

- **Agave nectar** — marketed as "natural", but higher in fructose than high-fructose corn syrup.
- **Most commercial whole-wheat bread** — often refined flour with caramel colouring. Check the first ingredient is "whole wheat flour", not "wheat flour" or "enriched flour".
- **Bran muffins** — usually 400+ calories and 30g+ of sugar despite the bran halo.
- **Trail mix** — store-bought versions often have more candy and dried fruit than nuts. Make your own.
- **Most protein bars** — many contain 15–25g of sugar to mask the protein taste. Choose options under 5g sugar.

Your villain score

Count the items you ticked across the five categories. Total possible: 25.

0–5: Your habits are mostly aligned with steadier blood sugar. Focus on consistency.

6–10: Solid foundation. Pick 2–3 swaps from your highest-tick category.

11–15: Moderate change worth trying. Drinks and snacks usually give the fastest results.

16–20: Significant opportunity. Focus on one category at a time, not all of them at once.

21–25: A lot of these foods are everywhere — this isn't a personal failing. Start with one or two swaps this week. Don't try to overhaul everything.

IMPORTANT REFRAME

A high score doesn't mean you're doing something wrong. The modern food environment is engineered to make these foods cheap, convenient, and delicious. Awareness is the first step. Action is gentle and gradual.

A simpler challenge

Forget overhauls. For seven days, pick *one* category from above. Make two swaps from that category. Notice how you feel — energy, hunger, mood, sleep — across the week. That's the experiment.

Two practical habits worth borrowing

Read labels. <5g of sugar per serving is a reasonable threshold for packaged foods.

Shop the perimeter. Fresh foods rarely need labels. Most processed food lives in the middle aisles of a supermarket.

What now?

If you took the Blood Sugar Villain quiz, your result told you which pattern is most often linked to your situation. Use this checklist alongside it — your villain page tells you the why; this gives you the what.

Find your blood sugar villain

mrbloodsugar.care/quiz · 2 minutes · personalised result

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