

Ask Leyla: Why does my husband fall asleep after meals?



Q: What is causing my husband to fall asleep two hours after a meal every day? He is 78 years old and in excellent health and takes no medication.

A: There are many reasons a meal can induce sleepiness.

Was it a big meal? Sometimes the sheer caloric load of a meal can weigh us down. Circulation is directed toward the abdomen for digestion and absorption. But this is the easy answer. The timeframe *when* your husband falls asleep has me suspecting something else.

Blood sugar increases after we eat. If it rises too high, as it would with insulin resistance or diabetes, it can cause sleepiness. The crash and burn of low blood sugar, or hypoglycemia, may also induce a nap—followed by an abrupt wake up. I've witnessed this first hand in our patients undergoing glucose tolerance tests.

The five-hour glucose tolerance test (GTT) is the only way to determine definitively if insulin resistance, diabetes or hypoglycemia exists. Normally, your doctor will only do a fasting blood glucose and hemoglobin A1c (HgbA1c). These, however, do not effectively reveal if there are wide swings in blood sugar.

A stealthier reason for sleepiness after eating is food sensitivities or allergies. Does your husband frequently consume the same foods? Are there certain foods he craves and eats regularly, such as bread, sweets or dairy products? Wheat and dairy are prime suspects in food allergy and allergic addiction. The concept of **allergic addiction** elucidates why we crave the foods that cause symptoms.

Your husband would benefit from a five-hour GTT and food allergy/sensitivity test with an integrative practitioner who is knowledgeable in this area.

To your health!

Leyla Muedin, MS, RD, CDN