

## Metabolism at Midlife: Understanding Blood Sugar Shifts

BY DR. BIJANA KADAKIA, ND, SERENITY WELLNESS CLINIC

Midlife often brings changes in energy, mood, or weight that feel harder to explain than before. For many women, sugar cravings, afternoon crashes, or stubborn pounds show up seemingly out of nowhere. While it's easy to chalk these up to "just getting older," shifts in blood sugar regulation play a bigger role than most realize.

Blood sugar, or glucose, is the body's main source of energy. Every cell depends on it. But when blood sugar levels swing too high or too low, the effects ripple throughout the body. Over time, dysregulated blood sugar can damage blood vessels, fuel inflammation, and increase the risk of cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Even before those conditions develop, symptoms like fatigue, brain fog, and disrupted sleep may point to underlying imbalances.

So why does midlife seem to bring these challenges to the surface? Hormonal changes are one key factor. Declining estrogen and progesterone affect how the body responds to

insulin, the hormone that helps shuttle glucose into cells. At the same time, natural loss of lean muscle slows metabolism, making it harder to keep blood sugar steady. Add in common midlife stressors - busy schedules, sleep disturbances, and ongoing demands - and it's no surprise that blood sugar balance can become more difficult to maintain.

Many routine panels already include fasting glucose or hemoglobin A1c to screen for diabetes, but these tests often only detect changes once blood sugar has been elevated for some time. Adding fasting insulin can provide earlier insight by showing how hard the body is working to keep glucose in range, sometimes revealing insulin resistance before blood sugar itself becomes abnormal. Looking at both A1c and insulin together can help uncover hidden risk and shed light on symptoms like fatigue, cravings, or weight changes.

Of course, numbers are only part of the picture. Day-to-day experiences often reflect blood

sugar patterns. Mid-afternoon energy slumps, nighttime waking, or strong sugar cravings are common signs that glucose regulation is off balance. Recognizing these patterns is the first step toward making helpful changes.

Fortunately, many strategies that support healthy blood sugar are both practical and effective. Meals that pair protein and fiber with carbohydrates help prevent sharp spikes and crashes. Regular movement - especially strength training - improves insulin sensitivity by preserving muscle mass. Prioritizing sleep and stress management reduces cortisol's disruptive effect on glucose levels. These small, consistent steps can add up, supporting not only metabolic health but also energy, mood, and long-term resilience.

Midlife doesn't have to mean a steady decline in metabolism. Instead, it can be a turning point - a time to understand what's happening inside the body and take steps to support it. By paying attention to both lab markers and everyday



patterns, women can navigate this stage with clarity and confidence, building a foundation for lasting health in the years ahead.



**Dr. Bijana Kadakia** is a naturopathic physician and acupuncturist serving the area since 2008 and practicing in Tigard at 12570 SW 69th Ave, Suite 101. 503-987-3622.