

Enjoying meals prepared at home: A Q shortcut to avoiding diabetes?

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People who often consume meals prepared at home are less likely to suffer from type 2 diabetes than those who consume such meals less frequently, according to new epidemiological research reported by Qi Sun, of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, Boston, USA and colleagues as part of *PLOS Medicine*'s special issue on Preventing Diabetes.

Internationally, there is an increasing tendency for people to eat out, and this could involve consumption of [fast food](#), for example. Concerns have been raised that such people have a diet that is rich in energy but relatively poor in nutrients—this could lead to weight gain which is, in turn, associated with an increased risk of type 2 [diabetes](#). Conversely, there has been little authoritative research investigating the role that preparing [meals](#) at [home](#) may play in altering the long term risks of developing diabetes and/or obesity.

Sun and colleagues employed large prospective datasets in which US health professionals—both men and women—were followed-up for long periods, with rigorous collection of data on health indicators, including self-reported information on eating habits and occurrence of diabetes. The results were corrected for various known factors that could affect dining habits, including marital status. All in all, the study analyzed 2.1 million years of follow-up data.

The findings indicate that people who reported consuming 5-7 evening meals prepared at home during a week had a 15% lower risk of type 2

diabetes than those who consumed 2 such meals or fewer in a week. A smaller, but still statistically significant, reduction was apparent for those who reported consuming more midday meals prepared at home. Other analyses suggest that less weight gain could partially explain the reported reduction in occurrence of type 2 diabetes in those often eating meals prepared at home.

Well-established diabetes prevention strategies include behavioral interventions aimed at increasing exercise and improving dietary habits. Sun and colleagues' findings suggest that the nutritional and lifestyle benefits of consuming meals prepared at home could contribute to these diabetes prevention efforts.

More information: Zong G, Eisenberg DM, Hu FB, Sun Q (2016) Consumption of Meals Prepared at Home and Risk of Type 2 Diabetes: An Analysis of Two Prospective Cohort Studies. *PLoS Med* 13(7): e1002052. [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pmed.1002052](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pmed.1002052)

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