



I'm Kicking the Sugar Habit!

Boost Your Immunity, Lose Weight and Feel Better Than You Have In Years

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The average American consumes 32 teaspoons of added sugar per day. That's right—32 teaspoons a day.

We all know that sugar can lead to weight gain, but that's just the beginning. People who eat a lot of sugar have nearly double the risk for heart disease as those who eat less, according to data from the Harvard Nurses' Health Study. They're more likely to develop insulin resistance and diabetes. They also tend to look older because sugar triggers the production of *advanced glycation end-products* (AGEs), chemical compounds that accelerate skin aging.

If you want to avoid these problems, it's not enough to merely cut back on sugar. In my experience, patients need to *eliminate* it from their diets—at least at the beginning—just like addicts have to eliminate drugs from their lives. In fact, a study showed that sugar cravings actually are more intense than the cravings for cocaine.

You don't have to give up sugar indefinitely. Once the cravings are gone, you can enjoy sweet foods again—although you probably will be happy consuming far less than before. After a sugar-free “washing out” period, you'll be more sensitive to sweet tastes. You won't want as much.

Bonus: Some people who have completed the four-week diet and stayed on the maintenance program for four or five months lost 35 pounds or more.

FIRST STEP: 3-DAY SUGAR FIX

For sugar lovers, three days without sweet stuff can seem like forever. But

it's an essential part of the sugar detox diet because when you go three days without any sugar, your palate readjusts. When you eat an apple after the three-day period, you'll think it's the sweetest thing you've ever tasted. You'll even notice the natural sweetness in a glass of whole or 2% milk (which contains about three teaspoons of naturally occurring sugar).

You may experience withdrawal symptoms during the first three days. These can include fatigue, headache, fogginess and irritability, but soon you'll feel better than you have in years.

Caution: If you have any type of blood sugar problem, including hypoglycemia, insulin resistance or diabetes, you must consult your physician before starting any type of diet, including the sugar detox diet. In addition, if you are on insulin or an oral medication to control blood sugar, it is likely that your dosage will need to be adjusted if you lower your daily sugar intake.

During the three days...

- **No foods or drinks with added sugar.** No candy, cookies, cake, doughnuts, etc.—not even a teaspoon of sugar in your morning coffee.

- **No artificial sweeteners of any kind,** including diet soft drinks. Artificial sweeteners contribute to the >>

Bottom Line/Personal interviewed Patricia Farris, MD, FAAD, clinical professor at Tulane University, New Orleans, and member of the media-expert team for the American Academy of Dermatology. She is coauthor, with Brooke Alpert, MS, RD, CDN, of *The Sugar Detox: Lose Weight, Feel Great, and Look Years Younger* (Da Capo Lifelong). www.DrPattiFarris.com



» sweetness overload that diminishes our ability to taste sugar.

■ **No starches.** This includes pasta, cereal, crackers, bread, potatoes and rice.

■ **No fruit,** except a little lemon or lime for cooking or to flavor a glass of water or tea. I hesitate to discourage people from eating fruit because it's such a healthy food, but it provides too much sugar when you're detoxing.

■ **No dairy.** No milk, cream, yogurt or cheese. You can have a little (one to two teaspoons) butter for cooking.

■ **Plenty of protein,** including lean red meat, chicken, fish, tofu and eggs.

■ **Most vegetables,** such as asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, peppers, kale, lettuce and more—but no corn, potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash, beets or other starchy vegetables.

■ **Nuts**—two one-ounce servings a day. Almonds, walnuts, cashews and other nuts are high in protein and fat, both of which will help you feel full. Nuts also will keep your hands (and mouth) busy when you're craving a sugary snack.

■ **Lots of water, but no alcohol.** It's a carbohydrate that contains more sugar than you might think. You can drink alcohol later (see below).

**NEXT STEP:
A FOUR-WEEK PLAN**

This is the fun part. During the three-day sugar "fix," you focused on not eating certain foods. Now you'll spend a month adding tasty but nutritious foods back into your diet. You'll continue to avoid overly sweet foods—and you'll use no added sugar—but you can begin eating whole grains, dairy and fresh fruits.

WEEK 1: Wine and cheese. You'll continue to eat healthy foods, but you now can add one apple a day and one daily serving of dairy, in addition to having a splash of milk or cream in your coffee or tea if you like. A serving of dairy could consist of one ounce of cheese... five ounces of plain yogurt... or one-half cup of cottage cheese. You also can have

one serving a day of high-fiber crackers, such as Finn Crisp Hi-Fibre or Triscuit Whole Grain Crackers.

You also can start drinking red wine if you wish—up to three four-ounce servings during the first week. Other alcoholic beverages such as white wine, beer and liquor should be avoided. Red wine is allowed because it is high in *resveratrol* and other antioxidants.

WEEK 2: More dairy, plus fruit. This is when you really start adding natural sugar back into your diet. You can have two servings of dairy daily if you wish and one serving of fruit in addition to an apple a day. You can have one-half cup of blackberries, blueberries, cantaloupe, raspberries or strawberries each day. Or you can have a grapefruit half. You'll be surprised how sweet fruit really is. You also are allowed one small sweet potato or yam (one-half cup cubed) daily.

WEEKS 3 AND 4: Whole grains and more. The third and fourth weeks are very satisfying because you can start eating grains again. But make sure it's whole grain. Carbohydrates such as white bread, white pasta and white rice are stripped of their fiber during processing, so they are easily broken down into sugar. Whole grains are high in fiber and nutrients and won't give the sugar kick that you would get from processed grains.

Examples: A daily serving of barley, buckwheat, oatmeal (not instant), quinoa, whole-grain pasta, whole-wheat bread or brown rice.

You might find yourself craving something that's deliciously sweet. Indulge yourself with a small daily serving (one ounce) of dark chocolate. **BLP**

More from Patricia Farris, MD, FAAD

Test Your Sugar IQ



1. Which one contains the most sugar?

- A. Snapple Lemon Tea (16-ounce bottle)
- B. Coca Cola (12-ounce can)
- C. Starbucks Vanilla Latte (Tall, 12 fluid ounces)

2. True or false? Humans naturally prefer the taste of sugar from birth.

3. True or false? Sugar toxicity causes liver damage.

4. True or false? Sugar substitutes help control weight gain.

5. Which of these foods is hiding the most sugar per half-cup serving?

- A. Tomato sauce
- B. Salsa
- C. Tomato soup

6. Reduced-fat packaged foods often have...

- A. Less sugar than the full-fat version

B. More sugar than the full-fat version

C. The same amount of sugar as the full-fat version

7. True or false? Eating too much sugar causes wrinkles.

8. True or false? Natural sugars, such as honey, have less of an effect on the body than refined sugar does.

9. True or false? Natural sugars, such as honey, have fewer calories than refined sugar.

10. True or false? People with high blood sugar generally look older.

Answers: 1. B, 2. True, 3. True, 4. False, 5. A, 6. B, 7. True, 8. False, 9. False, 10. True.

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