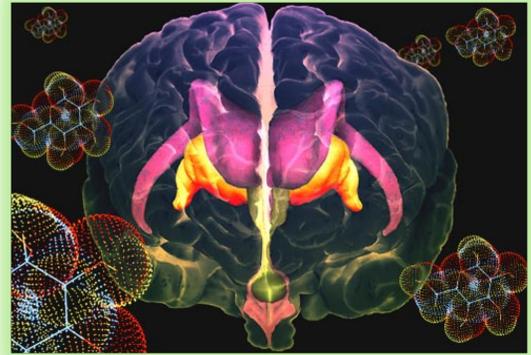


Sugar Addict? Sugar Detox? Hype or Hope?

Some people use sugary foods in ways that aren't healthy, even though it may not be an actual addiction. Some people use sugary foods in ways that aren't healthy, even though it may not be an actual addiction. Here's the truth about sugar cravings and how to tame your sweet tooth.

Your Brain on Sugar

Sugar fuels every cell in the brain. Your brain also sees sugar as a reward, which makes you keep wanting more of it. If you often eat a lot of sugar, you're reinforcing that reward, which can make it tough to break the habit.



Quick Sugar Highs ...

Why do you get a rush when you eat a midday candy bar? The sugar in it -- called a simple carbohydrate -- is quickly turned into glucose in your bloodstream. Your blood sugar levels spike. Simple carbs are also found in fruits, veggies, and dairy products. But these have fiber and protein that slow the process. Syrup, soda, candy, and table sugar don't.

... And Sugar Lows

Your body needs to move glucose out of the bloodstream and into your cells for energy. To do this, your pancreas makes insulin, a hormone. As a result, your blood sugar level may have a sudden drop. This rapid change in blood sugar leaves you feeling wiped out and shaky and searching for more sweets to regain that sugar "high." So that midday sugary treat has set you up for more bad eating.

Starch Can Equal Sugar

Think you don't have a sweet tooth, but crave bagels, chips, or french fries? These starchy foods are complex carbs that the body breaks down into simple sugars. Eaten without better foods, starches can make blood sugar surge and crash like sugar. White rice and white flour do this. Highly refined starches like white bread, pretzels, crackers, and pasta are worst.

Do Sugar Detox Diets Work?

Can you beat your sugar habit by quitting cold turkey? Some sugar detox plans urge you to avoid all sweets. That means all fruit, dairy, and refined grains. The idea is to purge your system of sugar. Diet changes like this are too drastic to keep up. Changes that you can do only for the short term mean you'll fall back to your old habits. *So, the answer is NO...*

Retrain Your Taste Buds

You don't need sugar as much as you think you do. In fact, you can train your taste buds to enjoy things that aren't as sweet. Try cutting out one sweet food from your diet each week. For example, pass on dessert after dinner. Start putting less sugar in your coffee or cereal. Over time, you will lose your need for that sugar taste.

Choose Good-for-You Sweets

You don't have to give up sweetness. Just get it from other sources. Try fresh berries or pureed fruit on oatmeal instead of sugar. Explore fruit that's dried, frozen, or canned (without too much added sugar). A glass of low-fat milk or low-sugar yogurt can help.



Kick the Habit in Baby Steps

If you make small, simple changes to your diet, it's easy to keep them up. Start by eating more fruits and vegetables. Drink extra water. Check food labels, and pick those that don't have a lot of sugar. Cut out a little bit of sugar each week. After a few weeks, you'll be surprised at how little you miss it.

Let Protein Help

Eating protein is an easy way to curb sugar cravings. High-protein foods digest more slowly, keeping you feeling full for longer. Protein doesn't make your blood sugar spike the way refined carbs and sugars do. Pick proteins like lean chicken, low-fat yogurt, eggs, nuts, or beans.

Fill Up on Fiber

Fiber helps fight a sugar itch in many ways. First, it keeps you full. High-fiber foods also give you more energy. Because they don't raise your blood sugar, there's no hungry crash after. Choose fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Or smear some peanut butter on an apple for a protein/fiber combo.

Get Outside

Exercise can help wipe out those sugar cravings and change the way you eat in general. You start to feel better and want healthier foods. Do what you like, such as walking, riding your bike, or swimming. Start out slow, and work toward at least 30 minutes at a time, 5 days a week.

Can Artificial Sweeteners Help?

Some studies suggest artificial sweeteners may leave you craving *more* sugar. That could make it harder to control your weight. The problem is, some experts say, that artificial sweeteners don't help you break your taste for sweets. *So, the answer is NO...*

How Much Sugar Is Too Much?

If you're like most people in the U.S., you eat 19 teaspoons or more of added sugar a day. That adds up to 285 calories, which health experts say is way too much. How much sugar should you be eating? According to the American heart Association, no more than 6 teaspoons daily for women. That's 100 calories. Men should get a max of 9 teaspoons. That's 150 calories.

Scout Out Hidden Sugar

Sugar can hide in foods where you least expect it. Although they don't seem sweet, ketchup, barbecue sauce, and pasta sauce can have loads of sugar. So can reduced-fat salad dressings, bread, baked beans, and some flavored coffees. Get in the habit of reading labels. Filter out high-sugar foods before they hit your shopping cart.

Limit the 'Healthy' Sugars, Too

Honey, brown sugar, and cane juice may sound healthy. But sugar is sugar. Whether it comes from bees or sugar cane or a special plant, it can cause your blood sugar to rise.



Sugar by Any Other Name

You don't always see the word "sugar" on a food label. It sometimes goes by another name, like these:

- Agave nectar
- Brown rice syrup
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Dextrose
- Evaporated cane juice
- Glucose
- Lactose
- Malt syrup
- Molasses
- Sucrose

Watch out for items that list any form of sugar in the first few ingredients, or have more than 4 total grams of sugar.

Source: WebMD-Weight Management

What's your take-away? What your next step?

How can Fit Chicks! help? Ideas: schedule a 1:1 Nutrition Consultation, enroll in the Accountability Group for weekly support and ideas; or create a Master Meal Plan that follows these suggestions