



TECHNIQUES TO HELP COMBAT SUGAR CRAVINGS AND ADDICTION

PORTIONS ADAPTED FROM: "LICK THE SUGAR HABIT" BY NANCY APPLETON, PH.D.

Don't Keep Sugar Laden Foods at Home: Throw away any foods that contain sugar; pitch them right out. Then, if you need a "fix," you will have to drive to the store to feed your habit. This will give you time to think and possibly change your mind. Or, buy only enough to satisfy your craving. Don't buy more than you can eat at the moment. Buy the smallest size of whatever it is you crave, and throw out what you don't eat. Better wasted outside the body than inside.

Remove Corn from Your Diet: Since so much of the sugar in processed foods comes from a corn base, I suggest you leave corn out of your diet until you have given up sugar for two months. If you have been eating a lot of sugar, you are probably allergic to corn. Any form of corn – cornstarch, corn sweetener, corn bread, corn on the cob – can bring on a craving. In fact, any form of food to which you are allergic can cause a craving. Avoid such foods.

Battle Hypoglycemia with Carbohydrates: If you should go into a hypoglycemic state and experience symptoms such as fatigue, perspiration, dizziness, or lightheadedness, you may be tempted to eat sugar, thinking that it will bring your blood sugar level back to normal. Remember that this will help you only for the moment and will hurt you in the long run. An influx of sugar may lift the blood sugar level so high that it has to come crashing down again.

Instead of sugar, eat complex carbohydrates such as potatoes, whole wheat bread, crackers, or even nuts. After eating these foods, it may take longer for your blood sugar level to return to normal, but it will avoid the yo-yo effect that sugar produces.

Snack on Healthy Foods: Snacks don't have to be unhealthful. Steam a few white potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, squash, and other foods containing complex carbohydrates. Keep these in your refrigerator along with raw foods such as green and red peppers, jicama, carrots, and celery. Then, during those snack attacks, you will have good healthy foods readily available to choose from.

Always Read Labels: If food labels contain words that you cannot pronounce (due to their obvious chemical origin) don't put that food in your mouth. Also, be on the lookout for any words on ingredient lists that mean sugar. This would include, for instance, honey, maple syrup, corn syrup, corn sweetener, dextrin, barley malt, rice syrup, glucose, sucrose, and dextrose.

As you probably know, ingredients must be listed on product labels according to their predominance; don't be fooled by a product that lists corn sweetener as the third ingredient, brown sugar as the fourth, and dextrose as the fifth. This is a deceptive method of dealing with a lot of sugar in a product. If these three types of sugar were combined on the products ingredient list, sugar might very well be the first (most predominant) ingredient on the label.

Eat Protein in Small Portions: Protein is absorbed and simultaneously broken down into amino acids. This makes possible the release of glycogen (stored sugar), which raises the blood glucose level. If the blood sugar level is elevated, it must come down; and as the level falls, you may crave sweets.

Next time you get a sugar craving, think about what you ate at your last meal; if it included a large portion of meat or fish, you might try cutting down on the portion next time. The body needs protein, but eat small portions at each meal, rather than a large portion at one meal. Some forms of protein may trigger cravings while others may not. This is another good time to get in touch with your body and pay attention to the signals it is giving you.

Get Help from Your Friends: Try going on the buddy system with a friend who is cutting out sugar from his or her diet or just trying to lose weight. Phone your buddy when you are feeling in need of a little support. Besides, support from a friend always feels good, whether it is for help or just for pure friendship.

If you are craving sugar because of loneliness or depression, telephoning a friend should help your state of mind, too. And, if you are a person who needs to be scolded into refraining from your bad habit, then pick someone who will do that for you. On the other hand, you may simply need someone who is willing to listen to you. And if you are responsible for being someone else's buddy, you may be less apt to cheat yourself.

Exercise: Exercise shuts down the appetat – the mechanism in the brain that controls appetite. Following vigorous exercise, most people are not hungry. So exercise helps a person stay fit, not only because it burns calories, but because it decreases one's appetite.

Avoid Artificial Sweeteners: In a number of laboratory tests, rats were given saccharin. Their bodies were fooled into thinking the sweetener was sugar, and they produced a boost of insulin. This is one reason why artificial sweeteners are poor aids for weight watchers and sugarholics; they are not good substitutes for sugar.

If you find yourself giving in to a candy craving, know that many health food stores carry candies sweetened with maltose, sorbitol, or other forms of complex natural sugars (sugars that need some digesting and breaking down into simple sugars). Choose these over products made with artificial sweeteners such as saccharin and NutraSweet, and certainly over those made with white granulated sugar, which get into the bloodstream quickly – too quickly.

Substitute Carob for Chocolate: There are many carob candies on the market today and most are made without sugar. Be aware, however, that most contain hydrogenated fat, which is difficult for the body to utilize. Try making your own candy from powdered carob instead. And be sure to try the luscious Carob Mousse and the Spicy Carob Brownies (see below).

Carob Mousse – Makes 6 one cup servings

6 cups well-cooked (baked or steamed) sweet potatoes
2 Tablespoons vanilla
½ cup powdered carob

Mix ingredients in a blender until thoroughly pureed. Pour into individual parfait glasses and refrigerate until ready to serve.

Spicy Carob Brownies

½ cup quinoa flour
½ cup rice flour
½ cup powdered carob
2 teaspoons powdered ginger
1 rounded teaspoon cinnamon
2 teaspoons non-aluminum baking powder
1 cup well-cooked (baked or steamed) sweet potatoes
2 butter
2 eggs

Combine the quinoa flour, rice flour, carob, ginger, cinnamon, and baking powder in a bowl and set aside. In a large mixing bowl, beat together the sweet potatoes, butter, and eggs until well-blended. Add the dry ingredients to the sweet-potato mixture, about a half cup at a time, to form a smooth batter. Pour batter into a 7-x-11-inch greased and floured baking pan. Bake in a 350°F oven for 25 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Allow to cool before cutting into squares and serving.

Avoid Temptation: There are certain situations in which you may be more likely to eat sugar. By all means, you should avoid these situations whenever possible. This doesn't mean you should quit your job, but you might, for instance, change the place where you eat lunch or take a walk when the fast-food truck comes.

Use Delaying Tactics: When you have a sugar craving, try to put off satisfying that urge for fifteen minutes, then a half hour, then an hour. Substitute the time with positive activities. Relaxation techniques work for some people, while others find strength in meditation and prayer. Often, the craving will diminish within fifteen minutes.

Avoid Soft Drinks: A glass of mineral water flavored with lemon, lime, or a tablespoon of orange or apple juice makes a great soft drink substitute. Sugar-free soft drinks are not acceptable substitutes; the phosphoric acid in all soft drinks changes the body's calcium-phosphorus ratio, upsetting its delicate chemical balance.

Keep Your Body in Homeostasis: It may take awhile for your unbalanced body to get back to homeostasis. Different organs can become oversensitive or underactive because of sugar abuse. It may take time for the organs to work properly again.

You can help by avoiding any foods to which you are allergic and by staying away from stressful situations. I recommend that you do not eat fruit until you have stopped having cravings. Fruit contains fructose and glucose, which will raise your blood sugar. For a sugar-sensitive person, fruit can change the mineral relationships. Coffee is another no-no. Coffee can lower your blood sugar, and you might experience such hypoglycemic symptoms as dizziness, lightheadedness, and perspiration, which can trigger a sugar craze. Alcohol is a stimulant to some and a depressant to others. Avoid any stimulant or depressant. The foods that help keep the body in homeostasis are vegetables, legumes, grains, and small amounts of protein.

Be Aware of Psychological Stressors: When you reach for that candy bar or soft drink, take a minute to look at your life and its stressors. Is there something that is making you anxious? Are you putting that sweet morsel in your mouth to soothe yourself? Try to make a connection between the stressors in your life and the need for "comfort food." Try to break the cycle.

Taste Sweetness without Ingesting Sugar: Use fruit-flavored lip gloss. You can taste flavors such as apple, kiwi, melon, grape, mint, cantaloupe, and watermelon. Or brush your teeth. Most toothpastes contain a little sugar – not enough to do you any harm, but just enough to possibly satisfy your craving.

If your craving for sugar is very strong, put sugar, in whatever form, into your mouth, chew it, and then spit it out. This will give you the taste, but very little will get into your bloodstream. The best part is that you will be consciously rejecting the sugar by spitting it out.

Set Realistic Goals: You may not be able to cut out sugar all at once; phasing it out slowly may be a better plan. Set a date – a deadline for when you want to stop eating sugar altogether. Each day until that deadline, decrease your sugar intake by a given amount. If you slip, observe it, but don't wallow – move on. Set your goal again. Realize that even one day without sugar is a triumph.

When you finally do make your goal, reward yourself. Treat yourself to a professional massage, take yourself out to dinner, or enjoy some other special treat.