

# Curb Sugar Cravings



## CHALLENGE

Eat less sugar to protect your health

## Requirements to complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Curb Sugar Cravings."
2. Practice eating less sugar on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



Minnesota resident Cassie Bjork felt bad when she ate an entire package of frosted sugar cookies. But that wasn't enough to curb her sugar cravings. She nibbled on

chocolates, raw cookie dough, milkshakes, soft drinks, and cake, too. Sometimes she'd even head to the store at midnight just to buy some sugary snacks.

Each time she tried to cut back on sugary foods, she failed. A day or two without them, or sometimes just an hour or two without a sweet treat, and she'd be back to the grocery store, the vending machine, or her stash of goodies.

Cassie wasn't overweight. But she knew her sugar craving was a big problem. She was a student learning to help people develop healthy eating habits. And she realized she was feeding her own sugar addiction.

Are You Addicted to Sugar? Take the quiz to find out:

T F

1.   Do you have trouble waking up in the morning and often crash in the afternoon?
2.   Do you often have headaches, brain fog, or moodiness?
3.   Do you crave sweet treats and carbs like pasta, bread, and white rice?
4.   Do you feel guilty after eating sugary snacks, then eat more?
5.   Do you eat sweet treats or drink a soda at least once a day?



If you answered "yes" to any of these statements, you're probably eating too much sugar. Maybe you eat a lot of candy or dessert. But did you know added sugar is also found in many other foods like cereal, yogurt, bread, and sauces? If you're eating too much sugar, your brain and your body will keep wanting more. Fortunately, diet and lifestyle changes can help.

## Sugar: The Body and Brain Connection

"Most people do not realize that sugar has the same effect on the brain as cocaine," says Cassie, now a registered dietitian. "It triggers the same reward centers as this dangerous drug. This clearly shows that it's addictive.<sup>1</sup> Sugar sensitivity is real and it can debilitate a person."

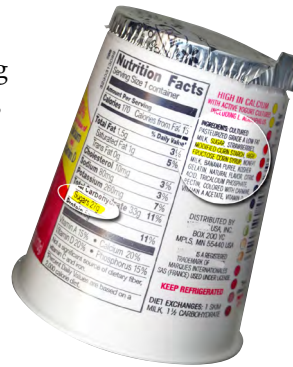
Happily, Cassie made diet and lifestyle changes that helped her break the cycle of sugar addiction. And so can you. Understanding how addictive sugar can be and where it shows up in your diet can be a great place to start. Want to improve your diet and your health? Take the month-long Health Challenge to *Curb Your Cravings*.

How to break the sugar habit  
<http://tinyurl.com/yam859af>

## The Trouble with Added Sugar

If you ate only whole foods, you'd still be consuming sugar. It's naturally found in many fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds.

Sugar found in whole foods isn't a big problem. The problem is added sugar. And sugar is added to a lot of foods, like drinks, desserts, yogurt, cereal, and sauces. How harmful is it? A recent study found that an estimated 180,000 deaths a year are linked to sugary beverages like soda and energy drinks.<sup>2</sup>



Too much sugar can increase your risk for:<sup>3</sup>

- ✓ Weight gain
- ✓ Tooth decay
- ✓ Heart disease
- ✓ Stroke
- ✓ Diabetes
- ✓ Liver damage
- ✓ Kidney damage
- ✓ High cholesterol
- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ Certain types of cancer



## 9 Ways to Curb Sugar Cravings

Are you eating a lot of foods with added sugar like Cassie was? You'll find that you will need to do more than "just decide" to control those cravings. It's a process that isn't always perfect. Learning to control sugar cravings is similar to dealing with any other kind of addiction.

"Keep in mind that getting control of any addictive-type problem nearly always requires multiple efforts," says Dr. Douglas Lisle, author of *The Pleasure Trap*. "If at first you don't fully succeed, keep trying and keep learning. Remember, most cigarette smokers finally quit on the eighth serious attempt."<sup>6</sup>

Ready to curb your sugar cravings? Here are 9 ways to retrain your brain and your body to eat less sugar:

- 1. Read food labels.** Watch out for ingredients like fructose and sucrose. Check the amount of sugar in a single serving. How does it measure up to recommended limits per day (no more than 37.5 grams for men, 25 grams for women)? Keep track of how much sugar you eat.
- 2. Eat healthy foods** like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds. Whole foods contain more fiber and complex carbohydrates that can help you feel fuller longer and curb sugar cravings.
- 3. Use the Glycemic Index.**

Foods that cause rapid spikes in blood sugar levels have a high Glycemic Index. Take a look at this list of 100 common foods (<http://tinyurl.com/y8qcescr>). Foods with Glycemic Index of 55 or less take longer to digest and control blood sugar.

FOOD	Glycemic index (glucose = 100)	Serving size (grams)	Glycemic load per serving
<b>BAKERY PRODUCTS AND BREADS</b>			
Banana cake, made with sugar	47	60	14
Banana cake, made without sugar	55	60	12
Sponge cake, plain	46	63	17
Vanilla cake made from packed mix with vanilla frosting (Betty Crocker)	42	111	24
Apple muffin, made with rolled oats and sugar	44	60	13
Apple muffin, made with rolled oats and without sugar	48	60	9
Waffles, hard (Doritos)	76	35	10
Dough, white, frozen	72	70	25
Soppressito, white, plain	91	30	14
Cheese bakery bread, 80% kernels	34	30	7
Hamburger bun	61	30	9
Kaiser roll	73	30	12
Pumpkinseed bread	56	30	7
50% cracked wheat kernel bread	58	30	12
White softwheat flour bread, average	75	30	11

- 4. Be more active.** Exercise helps use glucose (a form of sugar) as energy. But eat too much without enough exercise, and excess glucose is stored as fat.
- 5. Get tested.** Ask your doctor about an Hg A1c test. This test measures your blood sugar level over the last couple of months. Have diabetes or are at risk for the disease? This test will tell you.
- 6. Get enough sleep.** Lack of sleep causes changes in levels of two hunger hormones (ghrelin and leptin). When you're sleep deprived, hunger and food cravings can go up.
- 7. Eat a healthy breakfast.** New research



shows that eating a protein-rich breakfast can help curb sugar cravings later.<sup>7</sup> Add nuts to Greek yogurt or a smoothie. Make a tofu omelet. Or mix fruit with cottage cheese.

- 8. Practice distraction.** The next time you're craving a sweet treat, distract yourself for at least 30 seconds. Research shows a 30-second time-out can be enough to keep you from giving in to a craving.<sup>8</sup>
- 9. Drink more water.** If you're used to sipping sweet tea, soft drinks, or coffee with sugar or a sweet creamer, cut back. You might still be dehydrated. And that can increase cravings. Drink more water instead. If you don't like the taste of plain water, flavor it with fresh lemon, lime, or cucumber slices.

Sugar:  
Diet soda  
vs. regular soda  
<http://tinyurl.com/ybdfq9lg>

### How Much Added Sugar is Safe?

The American Heart Association recommends the following for added sugar:<sup>4</sup>

- **Men:** No more than 37.5 grams or 9 teaspoons of added sugar per day.
- **Women:** No more than 25 grams or 6 teaspoons of added sugar per day.

You need more than a measuring spoon to keep track of how much sugar you consume. It's hidden nearly everywhere. And a lot of it. For example, it's common for one can of soda or one candy bar to be filled with a day's worth of added sugar. Added sugar is a big reason why the average adult consumes 76.7 grams of sugar per day or 19 teaspoons.<sup>5</sup>

A food is high in sugar if any of these sweeteners listed below is one of the top three ingredients, or if there are three or more listed in the ingredients list. Here are the key words to look for on labels:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sugar/brown sugar    | <input type="checkbox"/> Evaporated cane juice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fructose             | <input type="checkbox"/> Turbinado sugar       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sucrose              | <input type="checkbox"/> Beet sugar            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Honey                | <input type="checkbox"/> Barley malt syrup     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Corn syrup           | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown rice syrup      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Molasses             | <input type="checkbox"/> Date sugar            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maltodextrin         | <input type="checkbox"/> Raw sugar             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maltose (malt sugar) |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invert sugar         |  |

10 natural ways  
to sweeten food  
[http://tinyurl.com/  
q9czsos](http://tinyurl.com/q9czsos)

### References

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7. Leidy, H.J., et al. (2013). Beneficial effects of a higher-protein breakfast on the appetitive, hormonal, and neural signals controlling energy intake regulation in overweight/obese, 'breakfast-skipping,' late-adolescent girls. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 97(4):677. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3945/ajcn.112.053116>
8. Weil, R., et al. (2014). Effects of simple distraction tasks on self-induced food cravings in men and women with grade 3 obesity. *Obesity Society*. <http://research.usc.edu.au/vital/access/manager/Repository/usc:14953>



# Curb Sugar Cravings



**CHALLENGE**  
Eat less sugar  
to protect  
your health

**Instructions**

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you ate less sugar.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you make to eat less sugar.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you ate less sugar. You must do this on at least 22 days this month to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I ate less sugar  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I exercised at least 30 minutes

Other wellness projects completed this month:  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_