



How to remove Sugar from your diet



College of Naturopathic Medicine's Eva Killeen reveals how to cut down on your sugar intake...

It is only in recent years that we have discovered just how detrimental sugar can be to our health. A great deal of research has shown that removing sources of sugar from your diet not only helps with weight loss, but can also reduce your risk for common health problems like Type 2 diabetes, cancer, digestive problems, autoimmune conditions and many others. As if that were not reason enough, you may also expect clearer skin, sharper memory, better mood and more energy. So what are you waiting for?

What is a sugar-free diet?

There are many types of sugar-free diet. It really depends on your goals and also your reason for going sugar-free in the first place.

At one end of the scale, people remove all sources of sugar from their diet including high-carbohydrate foods (like grains, fruits and even some vegetables) that can still be healthy but do contain natural sugars.

More often, however, people choose to limit sources of added sugar, such as in sweetened processed foods that are high in empty calories (like a spoonful

in your tea, fizzy drinks and cake, for example) and hidden sugars in food, which we explain below.

Eliminate all 'hidden' sugars

Sugar comes in many forms and you may not always know that you are eating it! To be sure that you are not consuming hidden sugars, be aware of sugar's various pseudonyms.

Common ones include:

- ◆ Fructose ◆ Dextrose
- ◆ Maltose ◆ Sucrose
- ◆ Ethyl Maltol ◆ Lactose
- ◆ Evaporated cane juice

The list goes on, but one way to ensure you are not consuming hidden sugars is to follow this simple dietary advice; stick to whole foods. To clarify, whole foods are free of added sugars (amongst other ingredients), which make them the healthy option. Seeds, vegetables, herbs, spices and nuts are all lower in naturally occurring sugars compared to most grains, but no matter what, all whole foods will be a better choice than processed foods. To help reduce your body's craving for sweeter foods, choose crunchy raw vegetables to fill up on.

'Low-fat' options are not your friend

For many people, the advent of 'low-fat' options appeared to be a dream come true. The foods tasted more or less the same but they were reduced or no-fat versions so you could eat to your heart's content without worrying about weight gain. We now know this not to be the case. In fact, when a product is low in fat it will generally be higher in added sugars. Studies have shown that a large number of low-fat foods which are marketed as healthier options contain far more sugar than their full-fat equivalents. In short – ditch the low-fat options and reap the health rewards.

Read food labels

While whole foods are always best, there are certain situations where this choice will not be in your control. The main point here is to make sure that you are checking the label on whatever you are buying from the store. You may be very surprised by some of the common items in which you will find sugar as a hidden ingredient. For example, in one of the most popular brands

Removing sources of sugar from your diet can reduce your risk of common health problems



seaweed into your diet, try adding a sprinkle of spirulina powder to your smoothie or blend up some nori sheets to make seaweed salt.

Alternative sweeteners – don't be fooled

Artificial sweeteners entered the marketplace in the 1950s and promised the taste of sweetness but with zero calories. 70 years on, there is research which highlights the fact that these alternative sweeteners are not the sugar-free miracle product they were cracked up to be.

Artificial sweeteners have no calories, that is true, but they do not leave you feeling satiated. This means that after you are not satisfied by your diet drink, you will want something else as well, and end up having consumed more than you would have done in the first place.

Another obvious problem is that artificial sweeteners may still feed into sugar addiction as they train the taste buds to want increasingly sweeter foods. Even more worrying than this are more serious health concerns that some of these artificial sweeteners have been linked to, such as cancer, nausea,

of soy sauce you'll find sugar listed as the second ingredient! If you are buying a plant-based milk, always choose the unsweetened option.

Eat your omegas

Omega-3 fatty acids are an important part of any diet and there is a variety of plant-based foods which are good sources including: chia, flax, hemp and walnuts. Ensuring sufficient consumption of foods rich in omega-3 fatty acids may help to maintain balanced blood sugar and reduce cravings for sweeter foods. Chia, flax, and hemp are also high in fibre, which may help you to feel fuller for substantially longer than sugary foods can.

Introduce seaweed to your diet. Yes, seaweed!

Seaweed may not be a regular on your dinner plate but seriously, it should be! Seaweed has a high chromium content. Chromium is a mineral that may help to lower the body's glycemic response. In so doing it can help reduce and even prevent sugar cravings. To get some



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digestive upset, impaired memory, headaches and mood disorders.

Healthy swaps

If you want to go sugar-free, the best way to start is to take it meal by meal. See how you can alter your current favourite recipes to reduce the sugar content or take it out altogether.

For example, if your current breakfast is a bowl of corn-based cereal (generally filled with hidden sugars and potential nasties), try swapping it for a bowl of porridge sprinkled with some chia seeds and fresh blueberries. Porridge is a healthier, naturally lower sugar option. Adding chia seeds, which are a plant-based protein, will help to slow down the release of sugar from your food. It will fill you up and help you feel fuller for longer.

Other healthy swaps that are easy to incorporate into your meal planning:

- ◆ *Swap a mocha for a green tea*
- ◆ *Swap crisps for some cashew nuts*
- ◆ *Swap white foods for wholegrain options*
- ◆ *Swap pasta for courgetti or rice for cauliflower* ♥

