

31-DAY SUGAR CHALLENGE

RULES AND GUIDELINES

Who's ready for a reset?! Or, perhaps you're wanting more energy, along with better sleep?! Even better – do you want to cut your cravings for sweet foods? Would you like to better resist junk food? Regardless of your reasons to consider a 31-day detox – you will feel GREAT if you partake! Join me by registering before Jan. 1 at sphealth.org/sugarchallenge.

WHY JOIN?

Added sweetener (not to be confused with natural sugars found in wholesome foods) is the single biggest diet issue in most people's lives. If you're like most people, you're consuming far more added sugar and alternative sweeteners than the recommended daily amount. This can seriously affect your health. Taking control and being in control is key!

WHO SHOULD JOIN?

EVERYONE can benefit from a sugar challenge – especially after holiday celebrations and indulgence. Added sweetener has been called the tobacco of the new century and the average American consumes three times the maximum daily recommended amount (6 to 9 tsp/day of added sugar is recommended and on average we are consuming over 22 tsp/day. WHOA!)

WHAT IS THE SUGAR CHALLENGE?

Unless all of your meals are made by scratch and you're aware of every ingredient going into your meals, you can be sure that over half of the normal grocery store fare has added sweetener. Sure...it's easy to note that foods like soda and cookies have sugar – but sugar is FLAVOR and also used to increase food product shelf life. That means that many everyday food products (sauces, dressings, peanut butter, etc.) have all been enhanced by the sweet stuff.

WHERE SHOULD YOU BEGIN?

The best way to identify added sugars is to look at the ingredient list and/or the food label for “added sugar.” If you don't have access to an ingredient list (eating out) then you really don't know and it's likely all food at restaurants have sugar (for processing). Some food products have up to 15 different types of sugars in one product! STOP yourself from only looking at the sugar grams listed on the label. For your reference, 4 grams added sugar = 1 tsp. Be very wary of the “Sugar-Free” label or of an added sugar column that lists 0g, as this detox isn't about replacing the real stuff with the fake stuff.

There are a host of widely used sugar substitutes and synthetic alternatives and they can be upwards of 100x sweeter than the real stuff, which can keep you addicted! Many of these are sugar alcohols (ending in "-ol") and are indigestible, and can cause both inflammation and serious digestive issues. Stay away! Quick note: The sugar industry and its lobbyists are on par with the tobacco industry as far as deceptions and lies about health. If you want to know more, there is a great book called “Pure, White, and Deadly.” Read it and be prepared to be SHOCKED!

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HOW DOES THE CHALLENGE WORK?

From Jan. 1 to Jan. 31 the detox consists of eliminating any added sweetener (real or fake) from your diet to get you to a place where you can enjoy it without cravings. This includes cookies, cakes, soda, sugar substitutes and alternatives, and even quality sweeteners like honey, maple syrup, etc. The purpose is to get your metabolism and your blood sugar stabilized, as well as to get your taste buds back to normal. Once your “engine” is cleaned out it can work properly, and what usually follows are decreased cravings, increased energy and sleep, better bathroom habits, better moods and even weight loss (for those who need it). You can then begin to add REAL sugar back into your life by staying within the recommended amounts and avoiding alternatives. You can start with just added sweetener, but include the below if you’d like to take it up a notch.

“A NOTCH UP...”

The main reason for added sweetener abstinence is to help control our body’s blood sugar levels. When we have too much added sweetener our body metabolizes it so quickly (because there’s no nourishment) that we end up with highs and lows -- subsequently increased cravings and hunger. Natural sugars, like those found in fruit, are attached to the food’s nutrients and its fiber so the body has to spend time to break it all down, thus releasing the natural sugar at a much slower rate and avoiding the highs and lows that are associated with cravings (and subsequently increased inflammation). Other foods that have been stripped of their nutritional value act in the same way. So, avoiding the following during your 31-days is also recommended.

Alcohol

Our bodies will always metabolize alcohol first – and much in the same way as it metabolizes added sugar. Alcohol is not bad, per se, but to get the full benefit of the detox, it is recommended to eliminate it along with added sugar.

Refined Grains

This includes the “whites” – the refined grains that have been stripped of their nutrients for shelf stability and subsequently enriched synthetically with the B-Vitamins that were originally stripped. In America, the word “enriched” has mostly been deleted from ingredient labels as it was becoming a dead giveaway for something that was synthetic. But you’ll be able to know by looking underneath the ingredient list for “vitamins and minerals.” In America, a food can be labeled Whole Grain when it’s only 51% whole grain – so when looking at the ingredient list be sure it only contains the whole grain and no “vitamins and minerals.”

Synthetic Ingredients

When looking at an ingredient list, first look for added sugar. But, also be looking for the “vitamins and minerals” indication on grains. Take it a step further and avoid food products with ingredients you either don’t recognize or wouldn’t be able to get yourself. An example is peanut butter – shouldn’t the only ingredients in peanut butter be peanuts (and perhaps salt)? A nice rule of thumb is that if you couldn’t grab all the ingredients from the store to make it yourself... don’t eat it.

Eating Out

Most food available outside of the home (restaurants, coffee shops, cafeterias) come from food distributors. Because real food rots, these foods generally contain many synthetic ingredients necessary to maintain the “freshness” or shelf stability. Plus, you don’t have access to an ingredient list. For this month, choose very carefully and try to be in control of all the food you eat by not eating out.

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SO WHAT CAN I EAT, THEN?

My suggestion first and foremost is don't try to also diet and limit your calorie intake. If you're advanced enough to take this detox to a higher level, then go for it. Otherwise, I suggest sticking to eliminating added sweetener and alcohol first, and then refined grains and synthetic food products second. This leaves room for all foods in all the five food groups.

Fruits

All fresh and frozen fruits are encouraged! Avoid juice (unless you juice it yourself) and read all ingredient lists on dried fruits and fruit snacks.

Vegetables

Enjoy any vegetable in its fresh and/or frozen (even canned) form. This includes POTATOES!

Whole Grains

Remember, a whole grain should be just that – 100% whole grain without added “vitamins and minerals.” The first word in the ingredient list should be “whole.”

Dairy

Enjoy milk, plain creamer (half/half), plain yogurt, and cheese. But, remember to READ THE INGREDIENT LIST!!

Protein

Enjoy both meat and non-meat sources – be careful about protein powders and protein snacks. I haven't found a store-bought jerky without added sugar so be wary!

REGISTER NOW

- Registration will ensure you get weekly educational emails during December (prep) and in January with tips, tricks and recipes
- Register and you'll be invited to the Facebook/Instagram groups for daily posts, Q&A opportunities and to share with other participants
- Feel free to register any family and friends to join the challenge with you! Support always encouraged!

Register now at sphealth.org/sugarchallenge. Registration isn't mandatory, but it is highly encouraged! There are also 5 Food Rx handouts available on the Sugar Challenge webpage to help you learn more about added sweeteners and other nutrition prescriptions.