



## Sugar Challenge Week 2

**As we navigate Week 2, are you surprised by the ingredients in your foods? Have you asked yourself, "What are the differences between added sugars and natural sugars?"**

As the names suggest, *natural sugars* occur naturally in foods, while *added sugars* are included later during processing. Here is a breakdown of the differences:

**Added Sugars:**

- Added to foods
- Manufacturers use it to preserve food
- Keeps food fresh longer
- Found in nearly all processed or restaurant foods
- Absorbed immediately by the body
- Void of nutrients

**Natural Sugars:**

- Typically found in fruits and vegetables
- Often occur through photosynthesis
- Occur without human interference
- Attached to fiber and nutrients in food
- Have to be broken down to be absorbed

The immediate absorption of added sugars and sugar substitutes are what cause the highs and lows of blood sugar that induce cravings. Hopefully by now, your blood sugar levels are beginning to stabilize. When eating natural sugars from fruits and vegetables, you have minimal blood sugar spikes due to the fiber, vitamins and minerals found in whole foods. We encourage you to keep eating whole foods in your diet to keep your blood sugar levels steady.

**During this challenge:** Avoid sugar substitutes because these are typically much sweeter than other added sugars and lead to worse sugar cravings. Furthermore, they are synthetic ingredients our bodies don't recognize, so they can lead to GI distress. Watch out for labels indicating something is "sugar-free" or "diet" because this generally means they contain sugar substitutes.

**Did you know,** according to the American Heart Association (AHA) adults in America consume an average of 77 grams (15.5 tsp) of added sugar per day! That adds up to 60 pounds of added sugar a year! It's recommended that we cut down this number to less than 10 tsp per day (AHA suggests no more than 6-9 tsp.)

**Don't give up!** Throughout this week, you might be experiencing the plateau of the challenge. As with most big changes, things will tend to get worse before they get better.

Increase your water intake to help overcome cravings. Drinking plain tea can also help when cravings hit. Keep in mind, cravings typically last less than 5 minutes. Try distracting yourself with a quick walk, stretch, or a small healthy snack. Soon your cravings will lessen, and you will be feeling great! You may even find yourself thinking you should have made these changes long ago.

**Strive for progress, not perfection.** The idea of this challenge is to help you learn new things, bring awareness to what you consume and how your body reacts to what we put in it. You don't have to be perfect.

We hope you make changes that you can maintain for longer than 21 days. It may seem extreme right now, and like you won't be able to keep this up forever. In a few weeks, you may realize that limiting your sugar intake is worth it. The energy, focus, less aches and pains, and better sleep you experience are worth skipping that donut in the breakroom.

This week's challenges:

- Make one swap! Replace a snack you would normally reach for with a whole food or no added sugar alternative (share your swap on the [SPH Challenge Facebook page!](#))
- Come up with one “distraction” you can implement when cravings hit