

Day Two: Helpful Hints to Cut Out the Sugar

Throughout this program we will be focusing on cleaning up our diet, and the one substance that is especially harmful for brain health is sugar. In all its forms.

1. Cut Back on Sugar-Filled Drinks

Sodas, energy drinks, sports drinks and fruit drinks contribute an astounding 44% of the added sugar in the North American diet. Even so-called “healthy” drinks like smoothies and fruit juices still contain tons of sugar.



Your body does not recognize calories from drinks in the same way it does from food. Drinks don't make you feel as full, so people who consume lots of calories from drinks do not eat less to compensate.

Instead: of sodas, drink plain tap water infused with cucumber and/or mint. Or drink sparkling water with a squeeze of fresh lemon or lime. Herbal or fruit teas are also excellent, and many of them provide anti-inflammatory and antioxidant ingredients that are also beneficial for your brain. Drink them

hot or cold with ice.

Coffee (black) is fine in moderation, but no more than a small cup or two per day.

2. Avoid Desserts

Most desserts are empty calories – filled with sugar and white flour, both of which cause blood sugar spikes and can leave you feeling tired, hungry and craving more sugar.

If you really feel the need for something sweet, try fresh fruit, plant-based yogurt with cinnamon or fruit, baked apples or pears with cinnamon, vegan dark chocolate – the higher the cocoa content, the lower the sugar.

Date are naturally sweet and extremely nutritious, so that is another choice. One or two should do it!

3. Avoid Sauces and Salad dressings With Sugar

Ketchup, barbecue sauce and bottled salad dressings often have huge amounts of sugar in them. It is better to make your own salad dressing with some lemon and/or lime, some extra virgin olive oil and some spices.

Note that some salad dressings substitute chemical artificial sweeteners so beware!

Instead of ketchup, use yellow mustard, fresh or dried herbs and/or spices, or vinegars like red wine or balsamic vinegar (make sure it has no sugar as some varieties do).

4. Eat Whole Foods

Whole foods have not been processed or refined. They are also free of additives and other artificial substances. Compare this to ultra-processed foods which contain preservatives, stabilizers, sugars and artificial flavors and colors. Examples of this are cereals, pizzas, boxed desserts, canned soups and stews, pasta sauces and other products found in the center aisles of your grocery store. Even most store-bought breads contain sugar. Shop the perimeter of the store.

Try to cook from scratch when possible so you can avoid added sugars. You don't have to cook elaborate meals. Simple tricks like marinating meat and fish in herbs, spices and olive oil will give you delicious results.

5. Stay Away from So-Called “Healthy” Snack Foods

Think granola and protein bars. Some granola bars can contain as much as 8 teaspoons of sugar! Dried fruit is full of fiber, nutrients and antioxidants, but it is also full of natural sugar, so dates, raisins, dried apples and the like should be eaten in moderation.

Instead of sugary snacks, try a small handful of nuts, which also gives you healthy calories and fats along with protein. Or just eat some fresh fruit. Yes, it has fructose, but your body knows what to do with fructose!

6. Learn the Alternative Names for Sugar

Remember when you are reading labels on processed foods, there are many different names for sugar, including sucrose, dextrose, maltose, and more. If you're not certain about an ingredient, check out this list or visit one of the many online sites that list the various names used to hide this substance.

Once you know and can easily recognize them, you won't be tricked into buying a product with any of these.

(Image courtesy of CheatDay Design)

75 DIFFERENT NAMES FOR SUGAR



Agave nectar	Dextrin	Maltol
Anhydrous dextrose	Dextrose	Maltose
Barbados sugar	Diastatic malt	Mannose
Barley malt	Diatase	Maple syrup
Barley malt syrup	Ethyl maltol	Molasses
Beet sugar	Evaporated cane juice	Muscovado
Brown sugar	Free-flowing brown sugars	Nectar
Buttered syrup	Fructose	Palm sugar
Cane juice	Fruit juice	Pancake syrup
Cane juice crystals	Fruit juice concentrate	Panela
Cane sugar	Galactose	Panocha
Caramel	Glucose	Powdered sugar
Carob syrup	Glucose syrup solids	Raw sugar
Castor sugar	Golden sugar	Refiner's syrup
Coconut palm sugar	Golden syrup	Rice syrup
Coconut sugar	Grape sugar	Saccharose
Confectioner's sugar	High-fructose corn syrup	Sorghum syrup
Corn sweetener	Honey	Sucrose
Corn syrup	Icing sugar	Sweet sorghum
Corn syrup solids	Isoglucose	Syrup
Crystalline fructose	Invert sugar	Table sugar
D-ribose	Lactose	Treacle
Date sugar	Malt	Turbinado sugar
Dehydrated cane juice	Malt syrup	White granulated sugar
Demerara sugar	Maltodextrin	Yellow sugar

Summary

The trick to cutting out sugar is to be prepared. Don't let yourself get so hungry that you grab the nearest thing, which is likely to be a chocolate bar or a sugary soda. If you're going to be traveling, take along some nuts and a couple of pieces of fruit. Cook your own sauces, make your own salad dressings. It's much easier and less expensive, and you control exactly what is in them.

In a journal, make a habit of tracking your diet, not just for sugar, but everything. When you write down and honestly track everything you eat for a week, you will be amazed at how much of what we eat can cause inflammation.

So – today and every day, when you wake up – say, “Just for today, I'm going to cut out sugar.”

Remember, this is your brain you're protecting. And the great thing is that when you do this for your brain, you are also helping protect yourself against diabetes and cancer.

It's worth it, I promise!

