



Oh Sugar!

We all know that eating a lot of added sugar is bad for your health. According to various studies, it contributes to type 2 diabetes, cancer, tooth decay, heart disease, and obesity. And what's surprising is that as per research, most people eat *too much* added sugar. The average American is said to eat about 60 grams (15 teaspoons) of added sugar in a day.

However, this sugar is not added by choice. These people aren't just pouring sugar all over their food. It's consumed in hidden form from various packaged and processed foods. **The majority of packaged foods that you buy from your grocery store contains sugar.**

What's more, these packaged foods are marketed as healthy! Their labeling refers to sugar by a different name, or several kinds of sugar is used in a single product making it easier for manufacturers to list them separately in ingredients.

Sometimes sugar is added in products you would have never thought of. For example, your breakfast cereals, yogurt, and spaghetti sauce all contain **added sugar**.

While fruits and vegetables also naturally have sugar in them, this type does not affect your blood sugar and is considered healthy. This is because fruits and vegetables have a lot of other healthy vitamins and minerals.

The side effects and dangers come from added sugars in packaged foods that you are generally not even aware of.

But to your respite, here are some ways in which you can cut back on the added sugar:

1. Stop having sugar-filled drinks

Many popular drinks contain large amounts of sugar. These include your energy drinks, sodas, sports drinks, fruit juices, and smoothies. The human body does not react to calories consumed from drinks the way it recognizes calories from food. Drinks don't give you the feeling of being full, so your diet doesn't reduce even after intaking lots of calories from drinks.

Some of the alternatives that you can try as lower-sugar drinks include:

- **Water - zero calories**
- **Herbal tea - can be taken hot or cold with ice**
- **Tea and coffee**
- **Sparkling water with a fresh lemon**

Cutting down on the intake of sugary drinks can significantly help with weight-loss.

2. Say NO to sugar-loaded desserts

Many desserts don't contain any nutritional value. They have high amounts of sugar which lead to increased blood sugar levels. You start to feel hungry, tired and crave for more sugar.

Cakes, doughnuts, pies, ice creams, and other grain and dairy-based desserts make for 18% of the intake of added sugar for the average American.

So, next time you have a sweet tooth craving, opt for alternatives like:

- Dates
- Dark chocolate with higher quantities of cocoa
- Baked fruit with cream
- Greek yogurt with fruit or cinnamon
- Fresh fruit

When you swap sugar-loaded desserts with baked fruit or fresh fruit, you not only significantly reduce sugar intake but you also increase the amounts of fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants that you are consuming in your diet.

3. Cook your own meals

A lot of people today rely on pre-cooked meals, junk food, packaged snacks, and processed foods. All these contain some quantities of added sugar (some that you wouldn't even be aware of).

Preparing your meals from scratch is a good idea. This may seem time-consuming in the beginning but is extremely healthy in the long run. You can rest assured that you are not eating unnecessary added sugar. That's why I have supplied you with plenty of meal ideas to get you started. But of course, there are thousands of amazing plant-based recipes online. So, go on, start experimenting and get creative with food!