

Extract that Sweet Tooth—Without Pain

Most of us enjoy the taste of something sweet occasionally; for some that desire becomes a constant part of our lives, and we find ourselves needing sweets at every meal.

But an overuse of sugar can lead to weight gain, tooth decay and health problems. Unfortunately, using many of the popular sugar substitutes, such as aspartame and sucralose can also cause weight gain and health problems. Instead of seeking new ways to satisfy a sweet tooth, it makes more sense to re-train our tastes so that the overly sweet diet that we are used to instead becomes much less appealing. Here are five ways to make that happen with little pain.

- *Know where your sugar is coming from. Many manufacturers use sugars, artificial sweeteners and High Fructose Corn Syrup to alter the taste of their products. When we eat these products, we naturally begin to expect the sweet taste, but do we really need salad dressing, tomato sauce, or saltine crackers to taste sweet? Instead, select products that do not add additional sweeteners, so your taste buds become used to a less sweet, more natural taste.*
- *Decode the sugar terms in labeled foods. Hint: many of them end in “-ose.” Look to limit all of these. Cane juice crystal, Cane sugar, Caramel, Carob syrup, Corn syrup, Corn syrup solids, Dextrin, Dextrose, Fructose, Fruit juice concentrate (apple, grape, or pear), Galactose, Glucose, High fructose corn syrup, Fructose corn syrup, Honey, Lactose, Agave nectar/syrup, Maltose, Malt syrup, Molasses, Sorbitol, Sucrose, Xylitol.*
- *Gradually decrease sweetener consumption. Instead of ordering sweet ice tea, order half sweet and half unsweetened. Begin to decrease the amount of sweet tea until you're enjoying completely unsweetened.*
- *Satisfy your desire for sweets with naturally sweet foods. Fruits provide a delicious treat, but also provide fiber and nutrients. Explore new fruits, raw, dry and cooked, for dessert.*
- *Play tricks on your own taste buds. The right combination of spices and herbs can trick your taste buds into thinking you're eating something really sweet. Try adding cinnamon, mint, ginger, nutmeg, vanilla, and other spices to your drinks and dishes for that extra kick.*
- *Eat a nutritious diet. Providing your body with a variety of nourishing food at regular intervals during the day will ensure that you don't get too hungry or out of control.*

In addition to these dietary strategies, consider substituting consuming sweet treats for other activities such as talking with a friend, exercising, doing a craft, sleeping or doing something else that you enjoy.