

## *Sugar Addiction? It's Not Your Fault!*

*Have you ever decided to lose weight, thinking that maybe you'll decrease your caloric intake by using Splenda instead of sugar, or drink Diet Coke instead of regular Coke, but instead of losing weight, you actually gain? You are not alone!*

*When this happens, people tend to think it's either their fault, lack of willpower, bad genes, or simply having a slow metabolism that makes it hard for them. Not necessarily true. The real cause may be a combination of factors that make it nearly impossible for even the most dedicated dieter to successfully lose weight. But, once you understand how your body, your local grocer and even your government can work against your quest to lose weight, you'll be better prepared to be a successful loser.*

*Contrary to popular belief, many of the well known sugar substitutes actually encourage your body to gain weight, and it has to do with your body's biology. When you eat sugar, your body automatically releases insulin to encourage your cells to use the sugar as energy throughout the body. But when you eat a sugar substitute such as aspartame/phenylalanine (commonly known as Equal, NutraSweet, Canderel), saccharin (known as Sweet 'N Low), sucralose (known as Splenda), acesulfame potassium (known as Ace K, Sunett, Sweet One) the body still believes you have eaten sugar. The sweet signal from your taste buds goes directly to your brain and sets off the same cascade of events that normally happens when the body tastes anything sweet.*

*Sugar alternatives DO have consequences! When you eat foods with sugar substitutes, insulin is released, but it doesn't find any real sugar to work on. Rather than just sit there, which will lead to hypoglycemia (a state of dangerously low blood sugars), the high blood insulin level sets off a new cascade of events in the body. The brain senses the problem and increases your appetite to make you hungry for real sugars and carbs so that the insulin can be used and balance restored. This is usually the reason for the increased appetite shortly after consuming products with sugar substitutes. If you pay close attention, you will see this phenomenon replay itself before your eyes over and over.*

*Also, because of the intense sweetness of many of these sugar substitutes (anywhere from 200x to 600x sweeter than sugar), the surge of insulin also leads to a state of fat storing and weight gain. When daily drinkers of diet soda were compared with non drinkers in a study by the University of Texas, guess who had a wider waist circumference and more weight gain at the end of the year? That's right, the diet soda drinkers. Unexpected consequences.*

*That's why so many times, you may think you're cutting calories by drinking a diet cola, only to find yourself hit with a craving soon after. Better instead to eliminate both the sugar and the sugar substitutes so you can decrease both calories and cravings.*

*While your local grocery store may carry many nutritious foods that help you maintain a healthy diet, grocers also carry products that can derail your progress. High fructose corn syrup is an additive often used to sweeten foods, extend shelf life and prevent freezer burn, but it can also lead to weight gain. Because it is cheaper to use than sugars, due to assistance from government subsidies, high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is found in many different foods, from ketchup to baked goods to cough syrups. There is believe that the body metabolizes HFCS differently than it does sugar, and as a result, HFCS is more likely to be turned into fat and not used for energy. Many experts believe that the ubiquitous usage of HFCS is a main reason for the increase in obesity in this country. See the 2004 research from the Louisiana State University and University of North Carolina about HFCS and obesity epidemic.*

*So what can a consumer do? Study labels carefully. Understand that "no sugar added" could still mean that an artificial sweetener could be included. Don't assume that because a food product, such as salad dressing, doesn't taste sweet, it doesn't contain a sweetener. And buy products from companies that have made the commitment to eliminate HFCS from their brands. By making sure you're not eating known or unknown sweeteners, you have a better chance of truly cutting calories in order to lose weight.*

*Happy losing.*