

## **The Skinny on Sugar: 5 ways to Reduce Your Sugar Intake and Avoid Overload**

*By: Dr. O*

*Morning coffee. Afternoon iced tea. Ketchup. Whether sprinkled by your hand or not, much of what we eat and drink each day is loaded with sugar. American taste buds have become accustomed to it. Our minds have become addicted. For most of us, cutting back on sugar can be as challenging as smoking cessation—especially if we don't quite understand why sugar is bad for us to begin with.*

*Sugar can be a generic term used to refer to any simple carbohydrate. Most of us have seen white granulated table sugar most of our lives. This refined sugar, also known as sucrose, is made up of two simpler sugars—fructose and glucose joined together by a chemical bond. Fructose is twice as sweet as glucose, thereby making sucrose distinctively sweeter than other types of carbohydrate foods when compared.*

*The problem we face is that we were not designed to consume refined simple sugars. Think about it: our ancestors were not adding granules of sugar to their foods and drinks each day. Rather, they had to chew the sugarcane to extract its sweetness. Refined sugar is a process of industrialization and can be extremely damaging to our bodies.*

*Besides being void of nutritional value—no vitamins, minerals, or fiber—sugar contains only empty calories that the body quickly converts to fat and stores away. Sugar has also been shown to suppress the body's immune system. Many studies have shown that cancer cells love sugar because it allows them to proliferate quickly since it easily converts to energy. Many cancer patients are counseled to eliminate or limit sugars in their diet.*

*Additionally, as most of us know, sugar leads to dental deterioration, decay, and cavities. It is also linked to diabetes, heart disease and obesity; excessive intake of sugar causes high release of insulin in the body, which encourages development diabetes, high triglycerides, visceral fat and insulin resistance. The more insulin our bodies release, the more fat is store.*

*These are not effects that any of us go looking for, so many are surprised and even shocked to learn just how much sugar is infused into the American diet. Food manufacturers have studied the science of sugar and know that it is addictive, triggering the excitement center of our brains and causing us to want more sugar the same way addicts crave a fix. Because of that, sugar is in all sorts of foods—even those you least expect, such as yogurt, whole wheat bread, crackers, salad dressing, and canned tomatoes. Does it taste good? Of course, especially when you're accustomed to eating the standard American diet, which is high in processed foods. Are the effects worth it? No.*

*So, what are some ways to reduce or remove sugar from your diet?*

- 1) *Do not add sugar to foods you eat. This is an easy strategy to immediately reduce the amount of sugar you are consuming. Resist adding sugar to coffee, tea, or cereals.*
- 2) *Avoid fat free snacks. This is tricky! We think if we avoid eating fat, we are choosing a healthier alternative. Not so! Fat-free is not the same as calorie-free, and sugar or carbs are often added to fat-free foods to replace the flavor lost by removal of fat.*
- 3) *Read your labels. Check the labels of foods that you eat! In order to reduce your sugar intake, you need to know where it can be found. In addition to sugar, look for sucrose, fructose, glucose, lactose, maltose and galactose.*
- 4) *Watch out for fruit juices. Real fruit is loaded with good natural sugar. Sure, fruit is healthy, but fruit juice has fewer nutrients because the process of making commercially available juices, removes nutritional fiber, vitamins and minerals from the fruit.*
- 5) *Avoid artificial sugars. Too often, we think if we are not consuming real sugar, we have found a healthy alternative. The truth is that artificial sweeteners contain many chemicals and byproducts that are not good for your health. They also increase your cravings for real sugar and carbohydrates.*

*Utilizing these five tips to remove excess sugar from your diet will help you begin to reduce sugar overload in your body and improve your overall health. Stay tuned to when I will discuss artificial sweeteners. Learn how sugar alternatives can actually be hazardous to your health (Hint: You may be putting embalming fluid, ammonia, antifreeze or chlorine into your body and not even realize it!).*