



What Is Your Sugar?

Sugar is not just the white stuff. It's the wine in the evening, sweets after dinner, pretzels in the afternoon, diet sodas, candies, cereal bars, sweet dressings on your salad, crackers. I'm sure you know which ones are yours. Like many people, my love affair with sugar began early. Throughout my life, *"my sugar"* has shifted with my activities. Some of my fondest childhood memories were about sweets—Mama's cakes, pies, or blueberry cobblers for Sunday dinners, trips to the ice cream parlor in the summer, candy and soda at the movies. Later, my sugar craving was corn chips, sodas, caramel popcorn or pretzels, a couple of glasses of wine at night, after-dinner sweets, and more.

Even though *"my sugar"* changed as I got older, the addiction did not stop. I cannot overemphasize this: if you want to heal you metabolism, breaking up with sugar is critical. Most people with chronically elevated blood sugar have no idea that they have it. Unless your blood sugar is frequently above 100 mg/dl, your doctor probably won't even mention it.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one-third of the population is pre-diabetic, but those numbers are likely underestimated. So now is the time to get real with yourself about which sugars you are going to let go and wean yourself off. Stabilizing the blood sugar is critical for a healthy metabolism and for disease prevention. We must get out of the sugar-burning mode and into fat-burning mode. I recommend the following health alternatives for choosing what to eat. One should include at least one or more of the following three things each time you eat to keep your blood sugar stable, hunger hormones balanced, and higher energy. Try more than one of the following, and you will stay satisfied longer and keep your blood sugar more stable.

1. Protein Choose high-quality organic, free-range animal as well as a plant-based protein (nuts, seeds, hemp, chia, quinoa).

2. Fiber Primarily reach for those found in vegetables, seeds, low sugar whole fruits, non-gluten whole grains, etc. Fiber helps to lower the glycemic response, especially soluble fiber such as that found in chia seeds.

3. Fat Pick healthy fat sources like avocados, coconut, and butter processed from cows that graze on grass. It is becoming easier to find as more consumers are demanding it and as more growers are raising their cattle strictly on the food they were meant to eat. This one is really critical. I can almost guarantee that if you have issues with blood sugar, you are not getting enough of the right fats.

Reset Your Sweet Tooth

Eating a lot of super sweet foods over time makes our taste buds less sensitive to sweets. So we need more and more to satisfy our sweet "tooth." This is why taking a vacation from foods that have a lot of added sugars is a good way to reset our sweet tooth and insulin sensitivity. The longer you go without sweets, the less you will crave super sweet foods, and the better your body will get at dealing with them.

In cooking food, we want our food to taste good. So, I want you to stick with this and enjoy it. I have found that some recipes and foods need just a hint of sweetness to make them more palatable and enjoyable. But it is important to resist the urge to sweeten foods to what your taste buds are used to; otherwise, you will not reset your sweet tooth. Some good alternative natural sweeteners are stevia, raw honey, or coconut palm sugar/nectar.

What about Fruits?

Sugar occurs naturally in some foods (such as fruit, milk). Because whole fruits also contain fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants along with the naturally occurring sugars, eating whole, fresh fruit is certainly different from eating candy. In healthy, active individuals, the sugars in whole fruit are generally ok and not worth being concerned about. But for those with insulin resistance, high triglycerides, fatty liver, high uric acid levels, or diabetes, eating a lot of higher glycemic fruits can cause blood sugar issues so limit your fruit consumption to no more than one to two small servings (1/4-1/2 cup) of lower-sugar fruits such as berries per day. But if it comes down to choosing between a piece of whole fruit or candy, always go with the whole fresh fruit because it comes paired with fiber, vitamins, and minerals! Fruit juice, on the other hand, lacks the fiber, and so it will spike the blood sugar higher and faster. Also most prepared juice is pasteurized, which destroys many of the nutrients anyway. So skip the fruit juice. If you do choose a fresh-pressed juice, make sure it is primarily vegetable juice and have it with some chia seeds or a handful of nuts, which will level out the blood sugar and help with the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins.

Dried fruit is also something to be cautious about. A concentrated source of natural sugars, dried fruits can create blood sugar surges and stimulate cravings, and many also contain sulfites.

So remember to make good choices when using sweeteners. Also, women should have no more than six teaspoons (twenty-four grams) of added sugars a day. Men should get no more than nine teaspoons (thirty-six grams) on average daily.

Until next month!

Vera