- Sugar

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SWEET *nothings*

Looking to cut back on sugar? Avoid these common mistakes and it'll be much easier.

Some bad news/good news to start your year. Sugar is as lousy for you as you've been told, but you can eat less of it without feeling deprived – seriously! When you limit your intake by paying more attention to what you eat and when, it's likely you'll actually enjoy your food more. If you want to eat less of the sweet stuff, here are common pitfalls to avoid and what to do instead:

1 *MISTAKE:* Trying to steer clear of added sugar for too long.

For most people, a life with no sugar is impractical (and no fun). Pooja Mottl, author of *The 3-Day Reset*, recommends avoiding all added sugars for just 72 hours. That's long enough to help you readjust your taste buds, get into the habit of checking nutrition labels, and discover ways to satisfy your sweet tooth with whole and minimally processed foods, but not so long that it will seem intimidating or as if you're setting yourself up for failure. "You'll feel a difference in your mouth and your energy," Mottl says. After those three days, keep being mindful and you'll continue to take in less – which is the point, right?

2 *MISTAKE:* Not being clear about what you're actually trying to avoid.

"Giving up sugar" and "cutting back on sugar" are too vague to be successful. Mottl suggests allowing what she calls whole and minimally processed sweeteners – maple syrup, raw honey, rapadura and coconut palm sugar – and limiting those to 1 to 2 teaspoons per day. You can decide for yourself whether to ban artificial sweeteners and/or which ones; just make sure to set guidelines before you start, or else your sugar ban will be confusing and won't stick.

3 *MISTAKE:* Ignoring your sweet tooth.

Some people view a sugar ban as a test of their ability to resist eating anything sweet, but Mottl says that's the wrong approach. The point is to find whole foods that satisfy your cravings, not to out-willpower your cravings entirely. "You should make sure that you do satisfy your sweetness cravings, but with unrefined sources of sugar," she says. Try eating fruit, or make a smoothie with bananas and dates and/or a small amount of honey.



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4 *MISTAKE:* Only avoiding foods that are sweet.

Savoury foods can still contain plenty of sugar. Just consider these foods Mottl lists that surprisingly can have as much sugar as sweets: pasta sauces, cured meats and tomato sauce. Read nutrition labels carefully (or, if you're eating out, start asking questions) and be alert for terms like corn sweetener, demerara, evaporated cane juice, evaporated cane juice solids, fruit juice concentrates, dextrose, fructose, lactose, and other terms ending in '-ose'. P

WORDS: ROBIN HILMANTEL. PHOTOGRAPHY: ISTOCK

Did you know?

The only taste humans are born craving is sugar.

SOURCE: *SUGAR NATION*, JEFF O'CONNELL

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