

The Secret to Eating Healthier Without Giving Up Sugar

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There are many compelling reasons for giving up sugar. They include losing weight and lowering your risk for diabetes and certain cancers.

On the other hand, going sugar-free can be tough when you realize how many products contain sugar. You may also be troubled by withdrawal symptoms, such as headaches and mood swings, if you try to quit cold turkey.

Fortunately, you can eat healthier while continuing to indulge your sweet tooth. If you're like most Americans, there's probably plenty of room in your diet for cutting back on sugar. In fact, average consumption is almost 82 grams a day compared to the 25 grams recommended by the World Health Organization and other experts.

If you're looking for alternatives to a sugar-free diet, take a look at these ideas. You'll find healthy options that can work for you.

How to Satisfy Your Sweet Tooth with Less Sugar

A diet low in sugar can still be delicious. You'll be more likely to make lasting changes if you like what you're eating.

Use these tips to cut down on sugar without going sugar-free:

1. **Taper down.** Reducing your intake gradually gives your body time to adjust. Try putting one teaspoon less of sugar into your coffee each week. You'll probably find that you're just as satisfied with your new habit.
2. **Add fruit.** Regardless of what you may have heard from some celebrities and

diet books, **most dieticians believe that fruit is an excellent source of fiber and nutrients.** If you're trying to lose weight, eat no more than 2 pieces a day to avoid excess calories.

3. **Spice it up.** Many natural flavors can replace refined sugar. Experiment with vanilla, cinnamon, and ginger.
4. **Enjoy chocolate.** Dark chocolate is also high in calories, but it's still a superfood. It's rich in antioxidants and good for your heart and brain. **Replace your afternoon cookie with a square of chocolate.**
5. **Substitute fats and protein.** Sugary treats will be easier to avoid if you fill up on more nutritious foods. Start the day with a breakfast that contains healthy fats and lean proteins. Enjoy a bean burrito or a vegetable omelet.

Other Goals for Healthy Eating

Quitting sugar is a worthwhile goal, but there are many more paths to a balanced diet. Choose from these ideas or ask your doctor to suggest priorities based on your individual needs.

Try these techniques:

1. **Eat more fiber.** Some studies have found that **increasing fiber is the single most positive change you can make to your diet.** Get most of your calories from beans, whole grains, brown rice, and crunchy vegetables.
2. **Focus on whole foods.** Cutting back on processed foods is a quick way to transform your eating habits. You'll eliminate most of your empty calories along with excess sugar and salt.

3. **Choose plants.** A plant-based diet is another plan with far-reaching benefits. Become a vegetarian or start with one or two meatless days a week.
4. **Drink responsibly.** Liquid calories are easy to overlook. Eat whole fruit instead of drinking juice to consume more fiber and fewer calories. Sip tea or garnish a plain glass of water with basil or berries when you want some flavor in your glass. Limit alcohol too.
5. **Dine at home.** Preparing your own meals and snacks gives you greater control over the ingredients. **Meals away from home tend to have more calories, fat, sodium, and sugar, whether you're visiting a fast food chain or a five-star hotel.**
6. **Change your thinking.** Your relationship with food counts too. Think of it as something to fuel your body and share with friends instead of treating it like an enemy.

Breaking up with sugar is hard to do. If you want to cut back without cutting it out completely, you can still lose weight and enjoy a more nutritious diet.