

5 Ways to Kick Sugar Addiction

Sugar is public health enemy No. 1.

It is the primary driver of the obesity epidemic. It is turning millions into diabetics. And there is new evidence it causes heart disease, cancer and other serious conditions.

That's the message from Jacob Teitelbaum, M.D., in his new book *The Complete Guide to Beating Sugar Addiction*.

Cutting out sugar is impossible for many people, because it not only tastes good, but it's addictive as much as any drug, he says.

"For many people, telling them to stop eating sugar is like telling a junkie to stop taking heroin," said Dr. Teitelbaum. "It won't happen. You have to treat the addiction, and then the sugar cravings go away.

"In most of human history, people have gotten their sugar by eating fruit. Now we are getting sugar in a much more concentrated form. The average American eats 140 to 150 pounds a year. This means we are getting almost 18 percent of our calories from sugar, which is far too much."

Too much sugar is not only harmful in itself, but most of the sugar we consume is refined, which means it's been stripped of any nutritional benefit.

The official panel that shapes the U.S. dietary guidelines recently took aim at sugar, calling on Americans to sharply cut their intake from the current 22 to 30 teaspoons of sugar a day down to 12.

According to Dr. Teitelbaum, the vast majority of the sugar Americans consume come not from the sugar sprinkled directly

into foods or in drinks, but is “added sugar” found in soft drinks, bakery items, and other prepared foods.

It’s important to be a savvy reader of labels to understand how much sugar you are eating, said Dr. Teitelbaum.

“Here’s a key tip: Ignore everything in the ‘Nutrition Facts’ box on the label except for the grams of sugar per serving. Take that number and divide by four and you’ll know how many teaspoons of sugar the product contains.

“Then you can decide if you want to spend your sugar budget that way.”

Here are five ways to kick your sugar addiction:

1. Banish guilt. “Most people feel guilty about eating sugary foods so they tend to shovel it in while trying not to think about it. It’s much better if they get rid of the guilt, eat a small portion while being mindful of the fact they are eating sugar, and savor it,” Dr. Teitelbaum said.

2. Cut out all sugary drinks. This includes not only soda, but fruit juices and sweetened coffee and milk drinks.

3. Choose stevia. This natural sweetener is healthier than chemical sweeteners such as aspartame, saccharin and sucralose.

4. Go for quality, not quantity. If you want a piece of candy, get the best you can buy, eat small amounts, and savor it.

5. Share the wealth. When eating at restaurants, order a decadent dessert if you want, but be sure to share it with the rest of the table.

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