

# Saying Goodbye to Sugar Takes Patience, Discipline

I remembered the feeling of days long ago, before my Christian conversion, when I got high; a feeling of lethargy, as if my arms weighed 50 pounds each. I could actually feel the blood course through my veins.

I could feel my heart beating without touching my chest. Suddenly things would get very quiet, and my vision centered in more and more as my peripheral vision narrowed.

Yes, I remembered the feeling. I was feeling it again, but now I was on sugar, not illegal drugs.

Every time I had my blood sugar checked, the results said I had a perfect balance. Then why did my post-sugar experiences rival my previously private pill-popping parties?

Amid a myriad of websites, books, and medical reports, I learned that refined carbohydrates (like white flour), as well as refined sugar, convert into blood sugar. In me, they created an emergency situation that I often ignored.

The basics of what sugar does to the body go like this: We eat and the food is changed into sugar, which then enters the bloodstream. As the blood sugar level begins to rise, the pancreas sends insulin into the bloodstream. The insulin opens to the cell wall, sending sugar from the bloodstream into the cell. This newly energized cell produces energy for the body to function and perform.

When we eat a refined carbohydrate like white sugar, our bodies borrow essential nutrients from healthy cells to metabolize the incomplete food, but the bacteria in the intestines that manufacture B vitamin complexes begin to die. When the B vitamin complex level declines, the glutamic acid

is not processed and sleepiness occurs. We may also experience decreased short-term memory and impairments with numerical calculative capabilities.

Now, I've never been a "numbers" person; I've always been more of a "words" person. Consequently, I don't need anything else to hinder my ability to make correct change at my next yard sale! Also, because I'm so easily distracted, I certainly don't need anything to impede my short-term focus.

I don't have diabetes, nor do I have hypoglycemia. According to *Potatoes Not Prozac* by Kathleen DesMaisons, I may be "sugar sensitive." Whatever. I feel drugged.

With my awareness of how what I consumed made me feel, I decided to experiment. I cut out sweets. That may sound simple, but it really wasn't. I went cold turkey. I was someone who could easily sit down and polish off an entire box of Oreos or Vienna Fingers in one sitting. So I couldn't have just one cookie or one donut. No, I was addicted, and being a self-proclaimed sweets addict, cold turkey was the only way for me.

I had decided four years earlier that potato chips were giving me zits. It was normal practice for me to come home from work and surf the Web with a large glass of diet cola and a can of pre-shaped potato chips by my side. I called them my computer chips. So, in the name of vanity, out went the chips. It was hard, but because I didn't want greasy skin, I did it. With that memory relatively fresh, I set out to avoid all sweets.

It didn't take me long to realize that I didn't want to live without chocolate. Viewing it as medicine, I replaced milk chocolate with dark chocolate. You get used to it, and if it's the only chocolate you allow yourself, you will come to love it. Obviously, this is to be ingested in moderation. For me that means get a very small custard bowl and mix dark chocolate chips (cheaper than the name brand, foil-wrapped

smooches) with unsalted peanuts. It's a not-too-bad-for-you treat and the small bowl is portion control you just can't argue with!

To help stave off cravings, I upped my vitamin B-12 and flax oil intake, something I'd learned while working in a weight-loss clinic. (I also learned that Guggul Raj and Triphala, both Ayurvedic, East Indian herbs, taken in combination, help curb salt and carb cravings.)

In just a couple of weeks, my chocolate cravings subsided and I began to feel different. My vision was clearer. I slept better. My wide-awake quiet times were more restful. Even my attention was more focused, which is a big deal for a hyper person like me. My body became more "regular" and I could even breathe better! With all these wonderful side effects of not eating sugar, I had an added bonus of losing five pounds!

While initially I had less energy, after just two weeks I was revitalized! The very thought of eating candy, cookies, cake, donuts, or pie made me cringe—not because I didn't still love them, but because I didn't want to go back to the way I had been feeling before. I found that there are sugar-free substitute snacks for nearly all of my old favorites.

The story doesn't end there. Like so many addicts, after about a year I fell off the sugar wagon and my sugar tolerance was low. I went to a popular pancake house for the advertised special. "It's dinner," I told myself. "It's not really a sweet—it's a meal!"

As I sat there just halfway through the tasty treat, everything began to get eerily quiet. My peripheral vision started to close in again. It was like looking through the wrong end of binoculars. "Oh my gosh," I thought. "I'm going to pass out right here at the restaurant!"

Again, vanity saved me. I grabbed a tall glass of ice water and gulped it down. I breathed deeply and tried to focus in on

something across the room. I surely didn't want to fall on a well-trodden restaurant carpet and have people stare at my drooling face falling to one side!

I quickly left the restaurant and for the next few hours sat in limp-armed lethargy, experiencing the sensation of my blood coursing through my veins. Yep. I remembered the feeling and I hated it.

Will I go back? No way/ I am back on the sugar wagon for good this time. If for no other reason than to save face, I will not put myself at risk of crumbling in a heap on some disgusting public floor.

If I can avoid the certain results of sugar—a suppressed immune system, anxiety, depression, kidney damage, gum disease, cholesterol upsets, and the development of food allergies or overstress to my organs—I will. Wouldn't I be a fool not to?

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