

Can Sugar Make Your Brain Foggy?

By now you already know that too much sugar harms your body. It makes you fat, leads to diabetes, heart disease, and cancer, and the list goes on and on.

If you have a health problem, chances are it's caused by, or made worse by, too much sugar in your diet. An easy test is to stop eating sugar, including carbohydrates like white bread, pasta, and rice (which affect your body the same way as sugar) for a couple of months and see how you feel.

Chances are, you'll feel better. Remember, sugar comes in many forms. The most popular is high fructose corn syrup, but there are many other forms, including other types ending in -ose, starches and, of course, cane sugar, syrups and honey.

If you don't think you can bear to go without the sugar and refined carbohydrates outlined above, you are most likely a sugar/carb addict. That is a subject for another blog, but in short, science has determined that in some people, sugar and carbs cause the release of dopamine in the brain, which is connected with pleasure and reward, so you never get enough ... in fact, you always want more.

This is a big problem for your health, but perhaps more importantly because no person should be in bondage to any substance, whether sugar, carbs, alcohol, painkillers, cocaine and so on.

If you find yourself thinking, "I can't go without ..." and you complete the sentence with a substance, you are an addict, and you need help. Humans are not made to be slaves to substances. We should be in control of them, not the other way around.

But take heart: if you are under the control of a substance,

you can change! In the case of sugar and carbs, you probably only need to go cold turkey, exercise extreme self-control for a time and your cravings will go away in a few days to a few weeks.

I am speaking from experience. However, if you're addicted to any of the other substances listed above, please get help from one many treatment centers and organizations available.

So while we've established that sugar is terrible for your body, did you also know it wrecks your brain? It does!

Researchers at UCLA fed three groups of rats the same food: "rat chow," or regular rat food. During this time, the researchers trained all three groups of rats to navigate a maze.

The maze had lots of walls, visual markings, so the rats could learn their way, and one exit. All three groups of rats learned the maze the same.

Then the researchers substituted one rat group's water with water spiked with fructose.

Sound familiar? That's what soda is. So that group of rats ingested lots of sugar over a period of six weeks. At the end of the six weeks the rats who had been fed fructose were slower and had greater difficulty remembering how to get through the maze than the rats who hadn't been fed the sugar.

According to one of the researchers, "Their brains showed a decline in synaptic activity. Their brain cells had trouble signaling each other, disrupting their ability to think clearly and recall the route they'd learned six weeks earlier."

The rats that were fed fructose also developed insulin resistance. Researchers suggest this disrupts learning and causes memory loss and corrupts the brain's ability to process

thoughts and emotions.

According to one scientist with the study, "Insulin is important in the body for controlling blood sugar, but it may play a different role in the brain, where insulin appears to disturb memory and learning," he said. "Our study shows that a high-fructose diet harms the brain as well as the body. This is something new."

But wait, there's more: a fascinating twist. Remember there were three rat groups? One stuck with the original diet, the other was fed a bunch of sugar, and the third was given a bunch of sugar fats, like the kind found salmon, walnuts, and flax. The group of rats that was fed sugar and Omega-3 fats navigated the maze much better than the group of rats that had just sugar.

The conclusion is obvious. Omega-3 fats lessen the destructive impact of sugar on the brain.

We can learn a lot from this study. The first thing is to avoid fructose like the plague. Regardless of what we do during the day, we must perform at our best intellectual ability, and fructose simply handicaps our thinking process.

We must look at the list of ingredients in all the things we purchase, because fructose is added to an estimated 80 percent of the items at the typical grocery store. If you see fructose in the list of ingredients, or one of its sugary cousins, such as ingredients ending in -ose, or "starch" or "syrup," don't purchase it.

Of course fructose and related sugary ingredients are added to sweets like cookies and candy. But that's just the tip of the iceberg. They're in foods that many people do not consider sweet, but they really are, such as bread, crackers, pasta sauce, granola bars, cereal, yogurt, jelly, and on and on and on.

So read the list of ingredients. Remember the list begins with the ingredients the food contains the most of, and goes from there. So if sugar is the first ingredients, run for the hills. That means it contains more sugar than anything else. This applies to many foods. Don't believe me? Check out the ingredients of soda or kiddie cereal.

If you are less than perfect, and choose to eat something sugary, this study teaches us that we can mitigate the damage from that sugar by consuming Omega-3 fats. Although these healthy fats are found in foods like salmon, walnuts, and flax, it's actually difficult to get enough Omega-3s from our diet.

So it's best to take a fish oil supplement. Make sure you look at the label of the supplement and get the one that tells you how many milligrams of DHA are in each capsule. Take enough capsules each day to equal about one gram of DHA per day.

By the way, you should know that the consumption of too many Omega-6 fats blocks your body's ability to process Omega-3 fats. So it's best to cut way, way back on Omega-6 fats. These are vegetable oils, corn, soybean, canola, etc. These are the oils in the clear, plastic bottles that line the grocery store shelves. Also check the list of ingredients on processed foods for these unhealthy oils.

A good diet consists of consuming EQUAL amounts of Omega-3 and Omega-6 fats. However, the average American consumes 20 times more Omega-6 fats than Omega-3s, and this imbalance leads to massive inflammation, a known killer. And since the two types of fats compete against each other, eating too many Omega-6 fats blocks your body's ability to process the healthy Omega-3s.

So to summarize, for healthy brain function, including memory and thinking, stay away from sugar and take one gram of DHA in a supplement form each day. Finally, drastically reduce your

consumption of Omega-6 oil.