

Why You Should Make This One New Year's Resolution and Stick to It

New research shows people who consume lots of sugar are more than twice as likely to die from heart disease. Doctors say sugar feeds cancer and Alzheimer's. Then there's sugar's link to diabetes—and the list goes on. That's why making giving up sugar your New Year's Resolution, to include artificial sweeteners, could be the best think you could do for your health in the 2018.

When we think of addiction, we tend to focus on drugs and alcohol. But more doctors now say sugar addiction is often overlooked as the destructive and deadly force it actually is. One of those physicians is sugar addiction specialist Dr. Vincent Pedre, Medical Director of Pedre Integrative Health and President of Dr. Pedre Wellness, based in New York City.

"Sugar is the source of all chronic disease," he said, "We know that solid tumors, cancers, feed on sugar."

Dr. Pedre says sugar includes all sweeteners such as high fructose corn syrup and natural ones like agave. He also points out that to your body, refined carbohydrates are sugars, too.

"People think, 'Well, I don't eat dessert, so I don't have a lot of sugar,'" he said, "But then they're eating bread, rice, pasta. We break down the carbohydrates, and they become sugar."

Most of Us Are Addicted

An estimated three-fourths of Americans are addicted to sugar and don't know it. But food manufacturers do. They add sugar

to nearly everything, even foods that may not seem sweet, such as crackers, bread, yogurt, pasta sauce and more. This keeps customers coming back for more.

There are nearly 60 different names for sugar. Check the list of ingredients. Red flags are any type of syrup and words that end in -ose, as well as fruit juice concentrate, fruit juice, molasses, turbinado, maltodextrin, evaporated cane juice, caramel and honey.

Most people might be shocked to learn that they consume 100 times more sugar than their ancestors did back in the 1800s. Dr. Pedre says most patients are also unaware that their sugar overload is at the root of their nagging health issues, and that when people give up sugar, these issues disappear.

“Bloating, abdominal pain,” he explained, “But also sinus congestion, mental fog, memory issues, fatigue, achiness, joint pains—these are all symptoms of consuming sugar in all of its forms. But people don’t connect the two.”

Scientists who tested lab animals discovered sugar is even more addictive than some illicit drugs.

“Sugar affects the same parts of the brain as cocaine,” Dr. Pedre said, “So I tell people that sugar is cocaine for your brain. And by that I mean that it affects the dopamine pathways. Dopamine is the neurotransmitter that makes you feel good. Things are great.”

He says people who are addicted to sugar can never be satisfied with just a taste. “Because that’s the design of the neural circuit in the brain,” he explained, “It’s going to want more hits. And it keeps wanting more and more because it becomes desensitized to small amounts.”

How to Quit

Dr. Pedre points out that alcoholics shouldn’t have even one

drink and drug addicts should avoid even just one hit. Therefore by extension, sugar addicts shouldn't have even a little. That's why he recommends giving up all sweets. After a number of days, it varies from person to person, the sugar addict generally stops craving it. In the meantime, he says power-through temptation, armed with the knowledge that it's only temporary.

"The craving is not going to last longer than 10 to 20 minutes," he explained, "So if you don't give in to the craving initially, eventually it's going to pass because your body is going to realize that it doesn't really need that for survival."

Dr. Pedre does offer this safety net: whole fruit. Whole fruit is fruit in its natural form, not fruit juice or fruit products like gummy fruits, dried fruits or fruit rolls. Dr. Pedre says eventually sugar addicts need to avoid the sugar in fruit, but it's an adequate substitute for the more harmful types of sugar."

"Now the chocolate-chip cookie is going to be a much faster hit for the brain, so you get that quicker satisfaction," he said, "If you have a fruit, let's say an orange or berries, you need to give it a little more time. The feedback is going to happen, it's just going to take a couple of minutes."

Artificial Sweeteners Worse than Sugar

Although whole fruit is an acceptable substitute for sugar, Dr. Pedre warns his patients to avoid artificial sweeteners at all costs. Research shows they're actually worse than the real thing."

In his book, *Happy Gut*, he says artificial sweeteners can harm our immune system by disrupting the bacteria in our digestive tract.

"It reduces a type of bacteria that tends to be found in lean,

healthy people and it increases another type of bacteria in this genus called bacteroidetes, that is found in people who are obese," he said.

Studies show people who regularly consume artificial sweeteners actually gain more weight. Artificial sweeteners, just like sugar, can trigger dangerous insulin resistance.

"It's like if you're becoming deaf and you have to turn the volume up higher. Your body is becoming deaf to the insulin signal. So your body jacks up the insulin," he continued, "But if insulin is high, what happens is, it tells your body, turns on genes, that say, 'store fat.'"

Benefits of Intermittent Fasting

Dr. Pedre says while insulin resistance is a serious condition, it doesn't have to be permanent. He recommends intermittent fasting to help fix the problem. There are many different ways people can fast intermittently. One of the most popular is going without food for a 12 to 16-hour stretch each night.

"The idea behind intermittent fasting is that when you're not eating you're allowing your insulin levels to drop, you're allowing the insulin receptors to reset so then what's happening towards the end of the fast is that you're increasing insulin sensitivity," he said, "So you're making your body insulin sensitive again."

It might not be easy, but giving up sweets in their many forms, including artificial sweeteners, could pay dividends in the long run. {eo}

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