

Why It's So Hard To Quit Sugar (And How To Finally Do It)



The struggle is real: ditching sugar is not as easy as it sounds. But it's not because you lack willpower (as so many conventional doctors and diets have preached for years)—it's because sugar truly is addictive (1).

Then there's the fact that sugar is everywhere. How many times have you tried to give up sugar only to come face to face with piles of candy at the checkout line or the best looking baked goods stacked on the coffee bar? That's not helping you get where you want.

Why Sugar is So Addictive

The addictive nature of sugar goes deeper than just the pleasurable taste of sweet foods. We are actually biologically wired to seek out sugary foods because of the energy they provide. But for our ancestors, energy from sweet foods would have been in the form of honey, sweet potatoes, and berries. Now, we're scratching that itch with foods that have been designed by food scientists to be addictive, to reach a "bliss point" of feel-good chemicals in the brain that keeps us coming back for more (2).

In our brain, a little thing called the dopamine receptor D2 (or DRD2 for short), must be activated or switched on for us to feel pleasure. The amino acid dopamine triggers this response, and you won't be surprised to learn that sugar and other stimulating addictions increase dopamine in the short term. Enter addiction. Some of us are more genetically prone to this than others.

The problem isn't just sugar, either. Flour is even worse. It raises blood sugar even more than table sugar (yep, even whole-wheat flour) and sets off the same slew of negative reactions in your body.

Sugar addiction isn't your fault, but it is something you should get a grip on if you're concerned about your health.

Sugar and Our Biology

When we eat sugar, it increases blood glucose. This tells the body to increase the hormone insulin from the pancreas to shuttle that glucose into cells. But when we constantly eat sugar (or flour) and have chronically high blood glucose, we develop insulin resistance, which is the predicator to developing type 2 diabetes. Insulin resistance usually comes with increased fat storage, high blood pressure, and poor cholesterol. High levels of blood sugar and insulin mean high levels of inflammation—causing a hormonal cascade that makes it hard to think clearly, maintain a healthy weight, stay in a good mood, have a healthy sex drive, and so much more.

Sugar leads to so many negative impacts on your health, way beyond just a "sugar crash."

But don't despair. With a little knowledge and some healthy eating prep-work, you can kick the sugar addiction and get the health you've been wanting.

3 Ways to Quit Sugar

Here are our favorite tips to beat that sugar addiction and discover the naturally sweet side of life:

1. Remove refined sugars, grain flours, sodas, fruit juices, and artificial sweeteners from your environment to avoid moments of weakness. It might be intimidating, but it's easier and less mentally painful to clean out your kitchen and stock it with healthy foods than trying to moderate your intake of the unhealthy ones.
2. Eat more healthy fats and high-quality proteins to decrease cravings. So many people rely on carbohydrates as their main energy source but fueling up with these other important macros instead comes with blood sugar balance and increased satiation, meaning less sugar cravings. Nuts and seeds, avocados and olives, pasture-raised eggs and meat, or wild-caught salmon are all awesome options. Get some fat and protein at every meal to optimize your metabolism.
3. Ask yourself what you really need. Are you bored, lonely, or sad? Emotions and ignoring our own basic needs—like love and connection—can often mean running to sweets for comfort. Figure out what your patterns are and address them head-on. If you're lonely call a friend or family member. If you're feeling sad, what's the real reason? It's not a sugar-deficit.

The good news is you don't have to white-knuckle through quitting sugar. If you follow Farmacy's 10 Day Reset you will automatically reset your body's neurotransmitters and hormones to stop those pesky cravings and enjoy the natural sweetness in REAL foods.

The Farmacy Team

Farmacy was founded by Dr. Mark Hyman and Dhru Purohit to create best in class protocols that combine food, lifestyle habits and supplementation to support true wellness

References:

1. DiNicolantonio JJ, O'Keefe JH, Wilson WL. Sugar addiction: is it real? A narrative review. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*. 2018;52:910-913. <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/52/14/910>
2. NPR. How The Food Industry Helps Engineer Our Cravings. <https://www.npr.org/sections/the-salt/2015/12/16/459981099/how-the-food-industry-helps-engineer-our-cravings>