

# How to Stop Sugar Cravings

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**We have all heard of sayings of, “I have a sweet tooth” or “it’s in my genes”, though there is no doubt sugar is highly addictive.**

Some people are more sensitive than others for craving

sugar. Though whether it’s to do with psychological behaviour or genetic dispositions the outcome is the same. A roller coaster of sugar cravings and low energy leads to a diseased state causing obesity, elevated cholesterol, type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

Counting calories long term does not work. A diet low in calories leads to sugar cravings due to a deficit of energy and a long term unhealthy relationship with food and eating disorders.

How did we get to be such a sugar craving nation? Remember when fat was the culprit along with eggs which incorrectly stated caused elevated cholesterol? This was incorrect advice given and the food manufacturers saw an opportunity to provide low fat/high sugar foods, along with carbonated sugary drinks. This was the beginning of the obesity epidemic and metabolic syndrome.

There is a lot of evidence now that states that sugar has the same impact as recreational drugs by increasing the release of dopamine, our “reward” neuro transmitter in the brain. However, with all dopamine driven substances, the more we stimulate this, the more we require to sustain the flow of dopamine.

That’s why that first bite of chocolate or cake tastes so much better than the last bite.

Conversely, the more overweight or higher the BMI, the less dopamine you release. Although most people know what high nutrient foods are, a more important discussion, such as what is driving unhealthy eating habits, seems more appropriate.

The food manufacturers know this and have captivated a market of hidden sugars through clever marketing and ingredients. Hidden sugars are found in soups, breads, yoghurts,

sauces and dressing.

Let’s say 5 grams of sugar is 1 teaspoon. The following table could be a standard day’s diet where you have, unknowingly, consumed 110 grams of sugar:

Product	Tsp Sugar per Serving
Can tomato soup	Up to 4 tsps
Granola bar	2 tsps
Sugary cereal	2 tsps per 40g
Low fat yoghurt	2 tsps per 200g
250ml Coke	6 tsp
2 slices of bread	$\frac{3}{4}$ tsp
150ml “healthy” store bought smoothie	5 tsps
<b>TOTAL SUGARS</b>	<b>22 teaspoons</b>

NHS guidelines state no more than 30g of sugar per day for adults and 24g for children. The paradox of this is that the government’s traffic light food labelling for these foods are stated per food, and does not take into account what you are eating for the rest of the day.

A quick tip to reduce sugar cravings:

If you are going to eat sugary foods, eat them after, or with, healthy fats or fibre to slow the release of sugars into the blood stream. This will lead to less cravings.

Examples are strawberries dipped in chocolate (the higher percentage of chocolate the better), chia seed jam, full fat yoghurt with a small piece of cake or a plain biscuit with a teaspoon of organic peanut butter.



Fermented foods have also been shown to reduce sugar cravings including kombucha, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, miso soup and tempeh. These contain beneficial bacteria that feed our gut microbiome. Research has shown that imbalances in our gut microbiome can be driving our sugar cravings. Bacteria cells outnumber human cells in our body by 10:1 and they are mainly crammed into our intestines. These beneficial microbes are essential for our immune function, mood, digestion, and bowel movements. Signs of imbalanced microbiome are excess gas, stomach cramps, diarrhoea and constipation.

The brain is the most demanding organ for sugar, otherwise known as glucose, consuming 20% of the glucose made. Eating foods high in unsaturated fat and fibre will help sustain blood sugar levels and leave you wanting LESS. Therefore, full fat organic yoghurt, avocados, salmon, mackerel, nuts, seeds and extra virgin olive oil will keep you satiated and energised for longer. Fibre rich foods are vegetables, oats, lentils, chickpeas and quinoa.

Glycaemic Index (GI) foods are not that helpful as they look at one particular type of food and measure the release of blood sugar. As we eat combined foods, the GI becomes irrelevant. In addition, we are metabolising sugars differently, which may explain why someone can have one square of chocolate whilst others can have the whole bar and more.

Here are some supplements and herbs that help support the nervous system and blood sugar regulation:

- Glutamine powder
- Lion's mane powder
- Creatine powder
- L-carnitine powder
- Vitamin B6 supplementation
- Maca powder

**Please do not take these without consulting a Nutritional Therapist.**

Lifestyle is just as important to get your dopamine reward and not just sugary foods. This could include walking with nature, having time for

hobbies and friends, listening to music, meditation, exercise and massage.

For a quick release of dopamine hit:

- Hot and cold showers by changing the temperature for as long as you can bare
- Sleeping at regular timings before 11pm
- Morning sunlight exposure outdoors

These quick fixes are available to everyone and I encourage you to do at least 1 of them daily. This will reduce sugar cravings, boost energy and mood.

Lastly, watch your caffeine intake as even if you have a small black espresso, this can stimulate glucose. 1-2 cups of coffee per day should be okay for most people, though not if you are sensitive to caffeine.



We all have an emergency storage of glucose in the liver which stores approximately 300 calories of sugar for emergencies.

Caffeine stimulates adrenalin and the body cannot differentiate between continued stimulation of caffeine and a real life danger. Sugar is shunted into the blood stream, and if we are

just at our desks, this excess sugar will be transported by our hormone, insulin, to be stored as fat around our middle, known as visceral fat.

A life of hidden sugars, chronic stress, excess caffeine and no dopamine activities can lead to excess fat in the liver known as non-alcohol fatty liver disease. This can make the body more resistant to insulin, straining the pancreas and its beta cells and triggering type 2 diabetes, heart disease and elevated cholesterol.

So, try cutting down your sugar and you may find that your energy levels rise and your health improves.

**We are arranging Sugar Craving Consultations for Thyroid UK members to provide a personalised plan and a list of sugar hacking recipes. Please email [melissa@melissa-cohen.com](mailto:melissa@melissa-cohen.com)**

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