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6 Hacks For Weaning Yourself Off All Processed Sugar

My initial thought of taking all processed sugar out of my diet made me want to run and hide. I had been dealing with achy joints for years, and so I decided to experiment with two weeks without processed sugar. How hard could it be?

After two weeks when my joints no longer ached, I decided to stay off all processed sugar indefinitely but realized if I was going to keep this up long term I needed to adopt some new habits.

Here are the six tips I use consistently to keep me off processed sugar with zero rebounding and without feeling deprived:

1. Find alternatives.

It's not easy to cut out sugar (especially at first), so when the cravings do come, as they always do, I make a fruit salad or sweet potato fries drizzled with coconut oil and seasoned with a little salt. While not everyone will choose to eat fruit after starting a no-sugar diet, I allow organic fruit because of its nutritional value and because of its high fiber content it doesn't affect blood sugar levels the way processed sugar does. When I'm really busy and would typically turn to sugar to keep me going, I'll make a cup of peppermint tea instead, which helps center me and provide more clarity on what my body needs.



2. Ask questions.

I read every food label thoroughly (knowing sugar is hidden in everything), and it comes with over 100 different names, so I know I need to do my due diligence. When out to dinner I ask the waiter what is in the food I ordered, going a step further than glancing at the menu. I usually skip on all sauces and dips (as they often hide sugar) and order my protein grilled and veggies steamed or sautéed; this way I can be sure the sugar can't sneak in.

3. Meditate daily.

After getting off all processed sugar, I notice having a daily meditation practice is needed to give my mood a boost on a regular basis. I've been sticking with my favorite 16-minute Soul Sync meditation by O&O Academy because it's quick enough that it's doable on a daily basis and improves my mood organically. I've found that different types of meditation resonate with people, and it's important to try out a few different styles to see what works for you.

4. Check in

It has taken me some time to figure out how to stay mindful throughout the day as a New Yorker with a "go go go" attitude. Once I made it a habit of turning my thoughts inward it became second nature. It started with the two questions I now ask myself every day: "How am I feeling right now?" and "What do I need at this moment?" With these mini check-ins, I no longer run around all day and come home at night feeling so run down that only a sugary snack can make it better. Now if I'm feeling tired and it's only 10 a.m., I ask myself, "Do I need to alter afternoon plans?" While changing plans isn't always the most popular answer, it helps me slow down, assess where I am mentally and physically, and find the root of the problem instead of turning to processed sugar.

5. Change your perspective

When we start labeling foods "bad," it tends to make us crave them more. I remember when my mom would tell me not to touch the stove because it's hot and all I could think about was what it would feel like if I touched it. Same goes for sugar. I've told myself repeatedly, till it finally sunk in, that I was choosing not to eat sugar—it wasn't because I was wrong or being punished. That single shift in perspective has given me the willpower I need just to say no.

6. Stay physically active.

I found that when I initially cut out sugar my mood was up and down more than usual. I knew it was because my body was detoxing from a familiar ingredient in my diet. I decided to increase my weight training to four times a week and found this extra dopamine kick was helpful in stabilizing my mood and keeping my cravings for sweets at bay.

These are just a few of the tactics I find helpful in my day-to-day and could be what you need to start experimenting with no sugar!

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