

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What's wrong with sugar?

Today the average American consumes about 130 pounds of sugar per year. And yet we all know that sugar is bad for us. Good grief, 71% of adults are overweight or obese! Friends, this is not good. And obesity is hardly the worst of it, as sugar consumption is related to diabetes, depression, cancer, cardiovascular disease, attention deficit disorders, and more. So how can something so bad for us be controlling our diets? Could it be that sugar addiction is real? It certainly is hard to resist the sugar temptation that surrounds us day and night!

The dangers of sugar have been well-documented, so increasingly, people have been turning to alternatives. The market is flooded with a variety of zero-calorie sweeteners that don't make us fat. Or do they? Not only do these alternatives provide zero nutrition—and some may have questionable repercussions on our health—but they promote our body's desire for sugar. In fact, an increasing number of studies have linked consumption of natural and artificial sweeteners with obesity. So yes, ALL forms of sugar are included in this challenge. Sorry Diet Coke fans! Let's get rolling on the course to good health!

What do I Need for the Sugar Challenge?

You need three things to succeed on this challenge: Desire, Knowledge, and Food. Sounds easy, right? Read on.

DESIRE. You have the desire or you wouldn't have signed up for this challenge. Now it's time to turn that desire into discipline and willpower. This might be a tough challenge for you – especially if you start your mornings with a Pop-Tart and a Mountain Dew. If you already limit your sugar, this challenge might be pretty easy! Some days you're going to be more tempted than others. And those high temptation days are often filled with stress, fatigue, and anxiety that test our willpower. You can make it easy on yourself by changing the triggers that lead you into a sugar frenzy. Take a walk instead of grabbing a late afternoon snack. Switch out your soda for a sparkling water. Take a hard look at your sugar “weak spots.” Find healthy substitutions or switch your routine to avoid temptations altogether. This challenge will make you aware of just how good you can feel without sugar.

KNOWLEDGE. Sugar is EVERYWHERE. It hides in your ketchup, lurks in your yogurt, invades your granola bar, and even swims in your soup. It goes by many names. Familiarize yourself with the many names of sugar and sugar substitutes. Sometimes it's easy to identify sugars – look for ingredients that end in -ose (sucrose, maltose, dextrose, glucose). Other times, the sweetener

One should eat to
live, not live to eat.

~ Benjamin Franklin

will be disguised. Here's a list of some of the more common sweeteners, both artificial and natural, that you can use as a guide.

- Agave Nectar
- Aspartame (Nutrasweet, Equal)
- Barley Malt or Rice Syrup
- Blackstrap Molasses
- Brown Sugar
- Coconut Sugar
- Corn Syrup
- Date Sugar
- Dextrose
- Erythritol
- Fructose, Crystalline
- Fruit Juice Concentrate
- Glycerine
- Honey
- Lactose
- Licorice Root
- Maltose
- Maple Sugar/ Syrup
- Saccharin
- Sorbitol
- Sorghum Molasses
- Splenda
- Stevia (Pure Via, Truvia)
- Sugar, Raw
- Turbinado Sugar
- Xylitol

FOOD. Well, this is obvious, isn't it? What is food? I mean real food? It's not Lucky Charms and Doritos. Visit the grocery store and **READ THE LIST OF INGREDIENTS** before you even consider purchasing. It's real simple – **Don't Eat What you Can't Pronounce!** Seriously. Now go through your pantry and refrigerator. Read the ingredients and toss out the junk. Check the sugar content to get a good sense of how frequently this stuff is hidden in food products. And yes, you've got to dump your soda habit. It's a new day and a new you!

So What CAN I Eat?

There's a lot of food you can eat! Buy fresh vegetables, high quality meats, grains, nuts, and fruit. Yes, most fruits, and even vegetables, contain sugar, but they have fiber and nutritional value that does your body good. The best option is for you to do a little cooking, which isn't a bad thing at all. Read the Food Guide for resources and tips. Oh, and one last thing! You'll avoid all types of alcohol for the first 10 days, and then if you like, you can add a moderate amount of most forms of alcohol back into your plan. You **CAN** do this! Welcome aboard.

And NOW you are ready for some prep work!

FOOD GUIDE

One of the biggest challenges of giving up sugar is finding suitable replacements. Now you could switch out your candy bar for a bag of pretzels and be compliant, but that's not a great choice. If you go heavy on the carbs during the Challenge, you could GAIN weight, and I'll bet that's not one of your goals. So my advice is to go with protein and good fats – they'll satisfy your hunger. Ideally, you'll prepare your own meals. But if you eat out, I can offer some suggestions there too.

Recipes

There are a gazillion recipe websites online, so you shouldn't have any problems at all finding healthy options. I follow a Whole30 approach, which is rather strict—no sugar, no dairy, no legumes. Believe it or not, that still leaves a lot of fantastic food on my plate. For some good recipes, browse through our free Healthy 7 Menus. For starters, you may want to make a large pot of chili, stew, or soup. Store leftovers in the freezer for easy meal options for the month.

Helpful Kitchen Gadgets

If you're going to be cooking, I recommend two kitchen gadgets.

The [Inspiralizer](#) is such a cool invention that I actually enjoy vegetables now. Zucchini “noodles” are even fun to make! You can find plenty of inspiration at Inspiralized.

The [Instant Pot](#) is all the rage these days. It's versatile and fast. I can saute my veggies, toss in other ingredients, switch the setting to “pressure cook,” and have a delicious meal in record time.

Meal Delivery Service

If you don't feel like planning and preparing meals every day, and don't mind spending money, you might do well with a meal delivery plan. In fact, you could do the entire 30 days through a combination of [Healthy 7](#) recipes and occasional meals delivered to your house. You have a lot of options, and some of the companies cater to special diets. Just check with each service about sugar in the recipes before placing an order.

Selected Grocery Items

It would be great if you can prepare all 30 days of meals from fresh and wholesome local ingredients. But I know there are plenty of communities that have limited access to good grocery stores. So if you're looking for healthy options, here are some recommendations from Amazon.

AMAZON GROCERIES

Beverages

What's your go-to beverage? Is it a big glass of milk, which contains a high amount of natural sugar? Or perhaps you have a dose of orange juice with your breakfast? Juices contain loads of sugar, so you'll want to avoid them (limited amounts of fruit are okay as you'll benefit from the fiber). And how about the cream and sugar you put in your coffee every day? Or the Coke Zero that you consider to be a life essential? No doubt about it, those might be tough to give up. But switch out the soda for Hint Water, try using almond or coconut milk instead of cow's milk, and opt for Nutpods creamer instead of the cream and sugar. And for good measure, sip on a cup of hot of tea.

[Almond Breeze Unsweetened Almond Milk](#)
[Coconut Milk Beverage, Unsweetened](#)
[Nutpods Dairy Free Creamer Unsweetened](#)
[Hint Water Variety Pack](#)
[La Croix Sparkling Water](#)
[Stash Lemon Ginger Tea](#)

Snacks

Skip the trips to the vending machine. If you need a snack, go with proteins and good fats. A handful of almonds should do the trick, or try some high-end no-sugar jerky.

[Chomps Jerky Sticks](#)
[Nick's Sticks 100% Grass-Fed Beef Snack Sticks](#)
[Wild Zora Bars Meat & Organic Veggie Bars](#)
[Natural Almonds](#)
[Raw Mixed Nuts](#)

Condiments and Spices

One of the biggest challenge may be finding non-sugar condiments. Most salad dressings have added sugar and you might have to skip the ketchup altogether. Here are some offerings that might fit the bill.

[Primal Kitchen Whole30 Kit](#)
[Tessemæ's All Natural Salad Dressing](#)
[Paleo Powder All Purpose Seasoning Variety Pack](#)

Additional Products

Try to avoid white flour and pasta. Now if you insist on cereal for breakfast, you can make your own no-sugar super healthy Coconut Nutty Flax Granola or Blueberry Pear Compote. But if you insist on buying cereal, you can give Uncle Sam's cereal a try – it has some barley malt in it but at less than 1 gram of sugar per serving, it's about as close to zero sugar as you can find.

[Uncle Sam Original Cereal](#)
[Bob's Red Mill Super Fine Almond Flour](#)
[Veggie rotini pasta](#)
[Muir Glen Organic Tomato Basil Pasta Sauce](#)

Dining Out

While preparing and eating your own meals is the way to go, you can absolutely treat yourself to an occasional dinner out. Just beware of most fast food restaurants - it's too easy to be swayed by the milkshake or sabotaged by hidden sugars. Here are some general suggestions for dining out.

- Check the menu online. Have your selection narrowed down by the time you step your foot in the door (or place an online order).
- Avoid food made with sauces, pasta, and breaded items. And if you order a salad, ask specifically about no-sugar dressing. But be careful that you aren't offered a "diet" dressing that has artificial sweetener in it.
- Look for steamed or grilled seafood, chicken, and lean cuts of beef. For a side, ask for grilled or steamed vegetables. If you like, add a baked potato with butter and sour cream.
- A burger is a good choice in most restaurants. Try a side salad or vegetables instead of the fries. And skip the bun.
- Stir fries are often a good bet. If you want to avoid the carb load, skip the rice. You can also give fajitas a try (without the tortilla and margarita).
- Breakfast for lunch or dinner can be a nice divergence. Steak and eggs with a side of hash browns should work in most cases. Avoid the toast or muffin that may come along for the ride.

Now there may be times when you need a quick bite and a chain restaurant is the next best thing. On the one hand, all chain restaurants provide their menus, ingredients, and nutritional values online, so you can make a smart choice after some research. On the other hand, it can be difficult to figure out if an item contains added sugar. For instance, it might surprise you that some of the chain restaurants have added sugar to "healthy" items, even grilled chicken! And most deli meats at the chain sandwich shops contain sugar. Consequently, some of your best bets are salads. Here are several of the better options.

[Chipotle](#) offers wonderful salad fixings. Select your favorite meat, add beans (skip the rice), cheese, sour cream, guacamole, and salsa. [Ingredient List](#)

[Boloco](#) is similar to Chipotle and a great place to build a dynamite salad. If you choose a salad dressing, make it the Caesar dressing. Avoid the bacon and croutons. [Ingredient List](#)

[Panera Bread](#) has some good salad options, but you'll have to avoid the chicken (the marinade has sugar in it), bacon, and croutons. The Greek Dressing or Caesar Dressing look like your best bets. [Nutrition Guide](#)

[Five Guys](#) is your place for a juicy burger – skip the bun and leave out the mushrooms. And the good news is that the fries have no sign of sugar (fresh cut potatoes cooked in peanut oil). You can try the hot sauce if you dare - the ketchup contains sugar. [Nutrition Information](#)