

In the news

Stamp out extra sugar

Read the fine print
Check labels so you don't pack your PB&J with sugar. Choose bread and peanut butter that have no more than 3 grams of sugar per serving. Swap out jelly for fruit spread to save at least 5 grams.

The trick to eating less of the sweet stuff is knowing where it's hidden and how to outsmart your cravings

By Stacey Colino

Everyone eats more sugar these days, even people who don't have a sweet tooth. On average, Americans in 2005 consumed 142 pounds (nearly 260,000 calories worth!) of added sugars and sweeteners, an increase of 19 percent compared with 1970, according to the USDA. Food manufacturers add sugar to practically everything, including breads and crackers, ketchup, teriyaki sauce, yogurt and peanut butter, to enhance flavor, provide moisture and act as a preservative. In the days before processed foods, most of the sugar Americans ate came from fruits and vegetables, where it exists naturally along with valuable nutrients. Today, most of the sugar we eat is refined, comes from packaged goods and has absolutely no nutritional value. Consuming too much sugar can set off a cascade of problems including obesity (which can lead to type 2 diabetes and heart disease), chronic inflammation (which has been linked with rheumatoid arthritis, Alzheimer's disease and fibromyalgia) and poor oral health. So it makes sense to watch your intake. The American Heart Association recommends that no more than half of your daily discretionary calories come from added sugars. (So if you have a budget of 2,000 calories a day, spend at least 1,800 on nutritious foods and a maximum of 200 on junky fare—including no more than 100 calories, or 25 grams, of added sugar.) Use these strategies to enjoy sweets and tame cravings without sacrificing your health.

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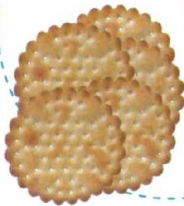
In the news

YOUR DAY ON SUGAR

You can overload without even realizing it, but by making some smart choices, it's easy to scale back.

BREAKFAST

2 frozen pancakes (11g sugar) with 2 Tbsp. maple syrup (23g) and 1 cup low-fat fruit-flavored yogurt (46g)



LUNCH

1 peanut butter and jam sandwich on whole-wheat bread (31g) with 1 32-oz. strawberry-kiwi smoothie (126g) and 5 crackers (1g)



DINNER

1 frozen entrée rice bowl with teriyaki chicken (14g), 1 green salad with 1 Tbsp bottled French dressing (3g) and ½ cup chocolate ice cream (17g)



= 272g of sugar

* This total includes both added sweeteners and naturally occurring sugars in the food.

Cut the sugar Swap the **pancakes and syrup** for 1 cup high-fiber, low-sugar cereal (6g) and ½ cup skim milk (6g); the **fruit-flavored yogurt** for plain Greek yogurt (9g) with 1 tsp. honey (7g); the **smoothie** for 8 sliced strawberries (7g) and 1 kiwi (8.5g); the **crackers** for 1 oz. tortilla chips (less than 1g); and the **rice bowl** for grilled chicken with fresh salsa (2g).

= 96.5g of sugar



Become a sweet sleuth

Ferret out concealed sources of sugar as you rediscover natural ones. You'll eat more of what's good for you and less of what you don't need. Follow these five tricks.

1 Do the math

When it comes to packaged foods, you can't always judge the sugar content by the label. To figure out how much sugar is actually in a serving, look at the nutrition-information box. Divide the number of grams of sugar by 4 (a teaspoon of sugar equals approximately 4 grams). So if ½ cup of granola has 16 grams of sugar, that's the same as dumping 4 teaspoons of sugar into your bowl!

2 Choose sweeteners wisely

Some sugar sources, like black-strap molasses, maple syrup, brown sugar and honey, contain healthful nutrients such as antioxidants, potassium and calcium (molasses has a small amount of iron, to boot). Those sweeteners are slightly better for you. Keep that in mind when reading labels or cooking or baking with sugar. But, remember, a larger amount of a sugar with antioxidants is not necessarily better than a smaller amount without the health benefits. Also, you don't really *need* sugar, which is why there is no recommended daily allowance for it.

3 Eat fewer processed foods

Whole foods such as fruits and vegetables come by their sugar naturally and contain other important nutrients. You can satisfy your sweet tooth healthfully by snacking on fruit or making your own desserts (like baked apples with cinnamon or broiled grapefruit with a sprinkling of brown sugar). With treats like those, you can control the amount and type of sugar you use.

4 Read the ingredients

Because nutrition labels don't distinguish between natural and added sugars (they just list the total sugar content, in grams), it can be hard to figure out how much of the sugar in sweetened appeasura, for example, comes from naturally occurring sugars (in the apples) or from added sweeteners (such as white or brown sugar, honey or high-fructose corn syrup). You have to read the ingredients list and remember that sugar goes by many names, including *molasses*, *evaporated cane juice*, *fruit juice concentrate*, *nectar* and *corn sweetener*, as well as anything ending with *-ose* (*dextrose*, *fructose*, *sucrose*, *maltose*) or *syrup* (*corn syrup*, *high-fructose corn syrup*, *malt syrup*). The higher up on the list those terms appear, the more sugar the food likely contains. A good rule of thumb: If sugar by any name is among the first three ingredients, put the item back on the shelf.

5 Beware of reduced-fat foods

When manufacturers lower the fat content in foods such as peanut butter and cookies, they often add more sugar to compensate. Compare nutrition panels to be sure you aren't getting excess sugar.

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In the news



KICK YOUR SUGAR HABIT

Common triggers such as stress, fatigue and being surrounded by doughnuts or candy at work can spark your desire for something sweet. Once you recognize the cues, you can outsmart them.

'I'm on a hormonal roller coaster'

Due to drops in estrogen and progesterone during the week or two before your period, you might experience head-to-toe changes in how you feel and function, including intense cravings for sugary or starchy foods. During the week before your period, your body's hormonal fluctuations cause you to burn an extra 200 calories per day, so you might feel hungrier. That doesn't mean you should gorge on chocolate; have a stash of healthier snacks available instead.

HOW TO COPE

✓ **Decompress.** Yoga, deep breathing or meditation can ease premenstrual anxiety and promote physical and mental calm. Research from the Himalayan Institute of Medical Sciences in India found that a hatha yoga technique called 61-points relaxation relieved PMS symptoms.



✓ **Munch on edamame.** Snacking on steamed edamame (young soybeans, which are a source of plant-based estrogens) can help rebalance your hormones. For added flavor, add a dash of paprika.

✓ **Try calming herbs.** Research from the University of California at San Francisco suggests that chasteberry, an herbal supplement, might be effective for PMS symptoms.

✓ **Supplement your diet.** Daily supplements of vitamin B6 (100mg), magnesium (200mg to 400mg) and calcium (1,000mg) can ease hormonally driven sugar cravings and mood swings.

'If I see a sweet food, resistance is futile'

When sweets and sugary eats are within easy reach, you're more likely to want them, even if you weren't thinking about them or aren't remotely hungry.

HOW TO COPE

✓ **Put it away.** If candy dishes sit on certain colleagues' desks, stay away. If you bring home a bag of cookies, stow it in a hard-to-reach spot, like the back of a top shelf in a cabinet.

✓ **Take vitamin B.** One study shows that low levels of B6 and B12 can fuel late-night sugar cravings. If you don't regularly eat fortified cereals or seafood, meat or poultry, take a B-complex supplement to help curb the urges.

✓ **Chew gum.** Research at Glasgow Caledonian University in the United Kingdom found that gum in the afternoon curbs appetite and the desire for sweets.

✓ **Think ahead.** Before you take a doughnut at the PTA meeting just because it's there, ask yourself if it's really worth it and whether you're actually hungry (if so, opt for fruit).



'I'm stressed out'

Chronic stress can tax your adrenal glands and cause them to become fatigued. When that happens, they can't produce enough stress hormones (like cortisol) and your blood sugar drops. When you eat something sweet, your blood sugar rises and your brain produces more calming serotonin. But within 30 minutes your blood sugar drops again and you feel as bad as ever. Over time, the cycle strains your adrenal system—which can lead to hormonal imbalances and obesity, experts warn.

HOW TO COPE

✓ **Take five.** Sit in a quiet space and breathe deeply from your belly, allowing your thoughts to float across your mind without really paying attention to them. Even five minutes of this exercise can help your body and mind relax.

✓ **Slip sugar under your tongue.** Place ½ teaspoon of sugar or two small mints (not sugar-free) under your tongue to lift your blood sugar quickly. (Unlike a piece of fruit, the sugar or candy doesn't have to be digested; it goes right into the bloodstream.) Follow with a protein-rich snack—cheese, nuts or a hardboiled egg—to keep glucose steady.



✓ **Boogie down.** Put on some music and dance your heart out. Or trot up and down the stairs in your office building for 15 minutes. Even a short bout of exercise can trigger the release of mood-boosting endorphins and zap stress, along with your desire to grab a cookie.

✓ **Unwind.** Take a warm, fragrant bath or spend time on a hobby (drawing, knitting, cooking, crafting, scrapbooking) you love. Doing anything that makes you feel good helps relieve stress.

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'I need energy'

Like clockwork, you reach for something sweet when a mid-afternoon slump hits. You get a brief energy boost (thanks to a rapid rise in blood glucose), but it's usually followed by a release of insulin, which causes a dramatic drop in blood sugar that can leave you more tired and craving more sugar.

HOW TO COPE

- ✓ **Go outside.** Fresh air and activity can boost energy and defuse tension, anger and depression, researchers say.
- ✓ **Drink a glass of cold H₂O.** Fill your cup with chilled water; the temperature can make you more alert.
- ✓ **Rub your ears.** Place the thumb and index finger of each hand around the top of each ear and gently rub from top to bottom for 20 to 30 seconds to stimulate energy channels.
- ✓ **Snack smarter.** Eat a combination of protein, fat and mild sweetness for a steady rise in blood sugar.

'I get yeast infections and a stuffy nose'

If you have fibromyalgia or chronic nasal congestion, or you take antibiotics frequently, you could have an overgrowth of candida (yeast), which releases a chemical in the body that produces sugar cravings. Eating too much sugar feeds the yeast and helps it multiply.

HOW TO COPE

- ✓ **Use probiotics.** These beneficial bacteria, which can prevent yeast growth, are present in certain yogurt, kefir and tempeh. You also can buy supplements; one type comes in "pearl" form; the tiny capsules are designed to stay stable longer at room temperature and help the healthful bacteria survive stomach acid.
- ✓ **Avoid antibiotics.** Unless you absolutely need them, try not to take antibiotics;

Keep added sugar in check

Manufacturers put sugar in many food products—sometimes more than necessary. Use this guide to moderate your intake.

Food:	Look for a sugar limit of:
Whole-wheat bread	3g or less per slice <i>*Pumpernickel and rye tend to have 1 gram of sugar or less per slice.</i>
Cereals	10g or less per ¾ cup
Crackers	4g or less per ounce
Pasta sauce	6g or less per ½ cup
Ketchup	4g or less per 1 Tbsp.
Most salad dressings	3g or less per 2 Tbsp.
Peanut butter	3g or less per 2 Tbsp.
Barbecue sauce	7g or less per 2 Tbsp.
Yogurt	17g or less per cup
Broth-based soup with meat/poultry	1g or less per cup

they can upset your body's natural bacteria levels and promote yeast overgrowth. If you must have antibiotics, take probiotics, too. And talk with your doctor about other ways to counter the negative effects of your medicine.

✓ **Spice up your food.** Satisfy your sweet tooth with sweet spices, like cinnamon, nutmeg, cloves and cardamom (on a baked apple, for instance). You'll satiate your cravings without sending your blood sugar haywire.

Sources: Ruth Frechman, RD, spokeswoman for the American Dietetic Association; Tara Gidus, RD, nutrition consultant in Orlando, Fla.; Frank Lipman, MD, founder and director of the Eleven Eleven Wellness Center in New York City and author of Revive: Stop Feeling Spent and Start Living Again; Suzann Pileggi Pawelski, nutrition, health and lifestyle coach in Philadelphia and New York City; Lona Sandon, RD, assistant professor of clinical nutrition at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center; Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, medical director of Fibromyalgia and Fatigue Centers and author of Beat Sugar Addiction Now!; Brian Wansink, PhD, director of the Food and Brand Lab at Cornell University in New York and author of Mindless Eating