

# Eat Less Sugar



**CHALLENGE**  
**Avoid added sugar in food and drinks**

## Requirements to Complete this HEALTH CHALLENGE™

1. Read "Eat Less Sugar."
2. To complete the challenge, avoid added sugar in food and drinks on at least 22 days this month.
3. Keep a record of your completed challenge in case your organization requires documentation.



**C**hicago resident Chris Almaguer knows what it's like to be addicted to sugar.

The twenty-something college graduate and professional chef grew up eating sweet treats, snacks and processed foods. And by the time he completed his culinary training, he weighed 400 pounds. But it only got worse from there. For the next three years, he drank a couple of 2-liter bottles of soda a day. He ate mountains of pasta with heavy cream and whole pizzas in a single sitting. And he spent most of his free time sitting, watching TV, and playing video games. Every time his blood sugar level spiked and began to fall, he reached for another candy bar, another soda, or some other processed food to fill the void. When he reached 550 pounds, Chris finally realized his addiction to sugar was killing him. You may not be eating as much junk food as Chris, but do you know how much sugar is in the foods you eat? The National Health and Nutrition Examination Study found that the average American eats 24 pounds of ice cream, drinks 53 gallons of soda, and gobbles up 11 pounds of chocolate every year. Add up all the other foods you eat from day to day, and you're consuming about 152 pounds of sugar a year. That's a ton of calories and added sugar that can harm your health. But it doesn't have to be that way. Change your diet. Commit to eating healthier. And take the month-long challenge to Eat Less Sugar.

Top 10 foods highest in sugar  
[tinyurl.com/kv5u4w8](http://tinyurl.com/kv5u4w8)

### Are You All Sugared Up? Take this quiz to find out.

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1.   Eating too much sugar raises your risk for heart disease and type 2 diabetes.
2.   Humans are born with a sweet tooth or craving for sugar.
3.   A typical soft drink contains more sugar than recommended for an entire day.
4.   In addition to soft drinks and sweet treats, sugar is commonly added to salad dressings, cereals, instant oatmeal, and other processed foods not typically considered "sweets."
5.   For best health, you should limit sugar to less than 10 teaspoons per day.



If you answered any of these statements incorrectly, you're not alone. Most people eat too much sugar, and that's partly because it's hidden in so many foods. Read food labels to find out how much sugar is in a serving. Eating more whole, plant-based foods instead of processed foods is a good way to protect your health and limit the amount of sugar you eat.

*Answers: 1. True. 2. False. 3. True. 4. True. 5. True.*

## The Trouble with Too Much Sugar

A recent study found that eating large amounts of added sugar nearly doubles your risk for heart disease and early death. High-sugar diets have also been linked to diabetes, poor bone health, tooth decay, obesity, certain types of cancer, and other serious health problems.

The American Medical Association recommends limiting sugar to 6 teaspoons (25 g) per day for women and 9 teaspoons (36 g) per day for men. And that's a lot less than most people currently consume. For example, a typical soft drink contains 44 grams of added sugar.

### Daily Sugar Limits

Women	25 grams	6 teaspoons
Men	36 grams	9 teaspoons

### Be a Sugar Sleuth

You may not think you eat that much sugar, but there's really only one way to find out. Be a sugar sleuth. Take a look at food labels in your kitchen and at the grocery store to find out how much sugar you're really getting in a single serving. You expect candy bars to be made with sugar. But there's also sugar in ketchup, canned vegetables, fruit snacks, juice, fat-free foods, and more. Many ready-to-eat breakfast cereals and instant oatmeals are also high in sugar.



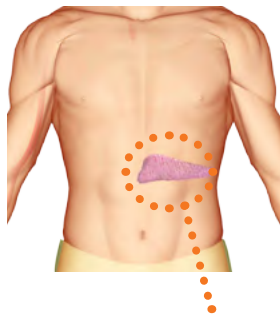
## All Things in Moderation

It's O.K. to eat sweet foods once in a while. Fruits, berries, and sweet potatoes can satisfy your craving for something sweet. You might even indulge in a little dessert from time to time, but moderation is the key. That's because too much sugar often crowds out more nutritious foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and healthy proteins. Sugars contain "empty calories" but not many nutrients, and too much sugar in your diet can turn into a vicious cycle of cravings. It works like this:

1. You feel hungry, so you grab a quick snack – like a candy bar or a bag of chips.



2. Sugars from the food you eat are rapidly absorbed by your body, causing blood sugar levels to rise quickly.



3. To combat elevated glucose levels, your pancreas produces a high amount of insulin. Your blood sugar level drops rapidly, and you feel hungry again.

4. Your body responds by storing calories for future energy needs as fat. And the cycle starts all over again.

How to break your sugar addiction  
[tinyurl.com/pxh7gr6](http://tinyurl.com/pxh7gr6)

This cycle of craving is a pretty good description of the kind of high-sugar diet Chris followed to reach 550 pounds. Fortunately, he started exercising and put his culinary skills to good use at home. It's been three years since he drank soda. He gave up junk food. And his healthy diet of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, nuts and seeds, low-fat dairy products, and some lean meats has helped him lose almost 300 pounds.



## Eat This. Not That.

Nutritious foods, like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy proteins are packed full of vitamins and minerals and are generally low in calories. The naturally-occurring sugars in these foods are absorbed more slowly. That means they provide a more even energy supply than foods loaded with sugar. They also help you feel full longer. Try these suggestions to help you eat less processed sugar:

Eat a pear, peach, apple, or other sweet fruit to satisfy a sugar craving.



You might feel deprived if you don't eat a few sweets. Reserve high-calorie desserts for special occasions, and eat them in moderate amounts.

Try these low-sugar desserts  
[tinyurl.com/aof36w3](http://tinyurl.com/aof36w3)

Choose desserts that are better for you – such as frozen yogurt topped with fruits and nuts.



If you eat sweets, eat them at meal time (not between meals) and brush your teeth afterwards.

7 ways to snack smarter  
[tinyurl.com/n2dc4mm](http://tinyurl.com/n2dc4mm)

Buy whole-grain, unsweetened cereals for breakfast. If you need a sweeter taste, add berries.

Take a closer look at how much sugar you're actually getting in your diet. If it's higher than it should be, look for ways to adjust your diet and cut back on added sugar. You'll be healthier, feel better, and live longer.

Sources: American Medical Association.; American Diabetes Association.; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.; American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.; U.S. Department of Agriculture.; American Heart Association.

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### Instructions

1. Post this calendar where you will see it daily (bathroom, kitchen, bedroom, etc.).
2. Record the number of days you eat less sugar.
3. Use the calendar to record the actions and choices you made to make eating less sugar become a regular part of your life.
4. At the end of the month, total the number of days you practiced healthy habits to eat less sugar to complete this challenge. Then keep up the practice for a lifetime of best health.

MONTH:							HC = Health Challenge™ ex. min. = exercise minutes
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	Weight & weekly summary
HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	HC [ ] ex. min. _____	
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\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I ate less sugar

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of days this month I got 30+ minutes of physical activity such as brisk walking or biking

### Other wellness projects completed this month:

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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

