Weighing In February 2017

How Sweet it is...

We all know that consuming sugar is a dangerous idea. But we are surrounded by sugar and everything we eat on an American diet seems to be swimming in sugar. Everyone knows how hard it is to be able to pull away from that favorite ice cream treat or that sweet tea given to you by the local fast food restaurant. But we Americans are paying a terrible price for our high consumption of sugar. Most researchers now are saying that sugar contributes to heart disease, cancer, and Alzheimer's. Gary Taubes is one of my favorite authors. He is an award-winning science writer and the author of the new book, "The Case Against Sugar" as well as his other books," Why We Get Fat" and "Good Calories Bad Calories." If you would like to learn more about nutrition and obesity, I highly recommend these excellent books on the perils of sugar. Our staff here at The Weigh Station has been working with patients for last 11 years, and we can honestly say that sugar is one of the most addictive substances on the face of the earth!
"No one can exert cognitive inhibition, willpower, over a biochemical drive that goes on every minute, of every day, of every year." – Dr. Robert H. Lustig

If you've ever tried to cut back on sugar, you probably realized how incredibly difficult it is. In some cases, it might have seemed downright impossible. It seems clear that when it comes to foods like sugar, which is found in most junk foods, something in the brain does not function like it's supposed to. The system in our brain that is supposed to regulate our food intake and prevent us from gaining weight malfunctions. The question is: Why?

To understand why this happens, Dr. Robert H. Lustig, a pediatric endocrinologist, and Dr. Elissa S. Epel, psychologist, explain how sugar and other junk foods can "hijack" the brain chemistry to make us want more and more. 1) Overstimulation of the reward centers of the brain causes addiction. 2) Sugar is uniquely fattening, primarily due to its high content of fructose. 3) When we eat foods that contain a lot of sugar, a massive amount of dopamine is released in an area of the brain called the Nucleus Accumbens. When we eat these foods often and in large amounts, the dopamine receptors start to down-regulate. Now there are fewer receptors for the dopamine. This means that the next time we eat these foods, their effect is blunted. We will need more junk food to get the same level of reward. Due to its powerful effect on the reward centers of the brain, sugar functions similarly to drugs of abuse like cocaine and nicotine. The same brain centers are at play. People who have a certain predisposition to addiction become addicted to these foods and lose control over their consumption. This is basically how sugar "hijacks" the brain chemistry to make us crave more and eat more.

Sugar has a powerful Influence over our behavior. For some people, there will be anatomical changes in the brain when exposed to sugar-laden foods. In many cases, this can end up in full-blown addiction. A report published in 2009 shows food addiction is plausible because "Brain pathways that evolved to respond to natural rewards are also activated by addictive drugs. Sugar releases opioids and dopamine thus might be expected to have addictive potential."

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A further report published in 2013 indicates that sugar is as, if not more, desirable than addictive drugs such as cocaine. This research aims to prove that "Sugar and sweetness can induce reward and craving that are comparable in magnitude to those induced by addictive drugs". Now you understand why there is a link between alcohol and carbohydrates and sugars since alcohol itself is sugar. As we've told you before, if there's alcohol addiction in your lineage, you will have a tendency to be addicted to sugars and carbohydrates. Given these two findings, it's hard to believe that parents are still largely oblivious to the long-term, damaging effects on children of over-consuming sugar-dense foods and beverages.
.According to a statement released by the World Health Organization (WHO), "Adults and children need to reduce their daily intake of free sugars to less than 10 percent of their total energy intake. A further reduction to below five percent or roughly 25 grams (6 teaspoons) a day would provide additional health benefits".

So what is a safe recommended daily allowance for sugar? Although we all lead different lifestyles and have varying metabolic requirements, the European Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) have suggested the following:
* Children aged 4 to 6 should have no more than 19g or five teaspoons of free sugars a day.
* Children aged 7 to 10 should have no more than 24g or six teaspoons of free sugars a day.
* Children aged 11 years and upwards, as well as adults, should have no more than 30g or seven teaspoons of free sugar a day.
To illustrate what this means, take a look at some of the popular beverages our children love, and their approximate sugar contents:
* 250ml iced tea = 19g or four teaspoons of free sugar.
* 250ml flavored yogurt = 26.8 g or five and a half teaspoons of free sugar.
* 330ml cola = 35g or seven teaspoons of free sugar.
* 330ml beer = 37g or six and a half teaspoons of free sugar.

Overcoming an addiction is by no means an easy feat, and the same holds true for sugar dependency. Almost all modern convenience consumables contain added free sugar, especially children's favorites such as cereals, beverages, and fast foods. So as you learn to read labels, be sure you look at all the sugary content. It can in time slip by you, so reread the articles on how to read the labels.
I leave you with a parting thought: Let's imagine a drug that can intoxicate us, can infuse us with energy, and can do so when taken by mouth. It doesn't have to be injected, smoked or snorted for us to experience subliminal and soothing effects. Also imagine that it mixes well with virtually every food and particularly liquids. It gives a feeling of pleasure so profound and intense that its pursuit becomes a driving force in their lives. Overconsumption of this drug may have long-term effects, but there is none in the short term--no staggering or dizziness or slurred speech or passing out or drifting away, no heart palpitations or distress. But later on in life, it destroys the heart, brain, pancreas, and joints Knowing all this, I doubt many of you would choose to partake of such a substance. But the literature is clear that this drug—sugar-- is one of the most dangerous substances we ingest on a regular basis. Look up the author Gary Taube. His literature on this subject I believe you will find fascinating.

Learn what to eat, and you will continue to lose weight. As always we are here to help you in any way we can. Please don't hesitate to ask for help if you need it!

Blessings to all,

Chuck Shaffer MD

Why I am losing Weight but my Cholesterol is worse?

You having been coming to The Weigh Station for a month and are excited to go see your PCP for a routine checkup, after all you have lost 20 pounds since your last checkup. But when your lab results come back and your PCP is concerned. Your HDL (good cholesterol) has dropped, and your triglycerides have gone up! Why is this happening?

It's Simple: You are losing weight.

When you lose fat, you are also mobilizing the energy (calories) stored as fat. This means that each molecule of fat begins breaking down into 3 fatty acids with a triglyceride backbone. Where do these go once they are broken down? Straight to your bloodstream!!
These fatty acids also interact with the other elements in the bloodstream and can cause the following short term side-effects during active weight loss:

—**Increased triglycerides**–A starting triglyceride level of, say, 120 mg/dl, can increase to 180 mg/dl during active weight loss. (Broken down Fat = 3 fatty acids and a Triglyceride backbone)

—**Decreased HDL**–Excess fatty acids and triglycerides modify HDL particles, causing their degradation and elimination. A starting HDL of 45 mg/dl can drop to 28 mg/dl, for example.

—**LDL (your lousy cholesterol) go haywire**–The conventional calculated LDL cholesterol, can go in any direction rather unpredictably: They can go up, down, or sideways. Likewise, the (miserably useless) total cholesterol value can go up, down, or sideways.

The key is to recognize that this is both normal and short lived. Unfortunately, not all doctors are aware that this happens and may try to get you on statin drugs, etc.
So, if you have an appointment with your PCP, try to talk them into waiting to have blood work done until your weight has been stable for at least 4 weeks. Only then will you get truly accurate blood lipid readings.

-Tricia Foley, MS, RD, CLT

Recipe of the month:

Thai Chicken Soup:

Ingredients:

- 12 ounces cooked chicken, shredded or cut up
- 4 ounces onion, chopped
- 1/2 C red bell pepper, chopped
- 3 C green cabbage, chopped
- 1 tsp minced ginger
- 4 C chicken broth
- 1 C unsweetened coconut milk
- 2 tbsp red curry paste
- 1 tsp sesame oil (added right before serving)

Directions: Mix all ingredients but the coconut milk in a large soup pot. Stir well, bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce to a simmer and simmer for about 20 minutes to allow cabbage to get tender. Once cabbage is tender, add coconut milk. Simmer 2-3 minutes more. Add sesame oil, stir and serve

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