

Weighing In November 2013

The Weigh Station

Sugar, The Obesity Drug of Choice

Every month we publish a newsletter. It is a lot more challenging than it may seem. I try to get an idea of what to write about each month from thinking about patients and their problems. This past month, one of the questions that showed up many times was people's addiction to sugar. I am dedicating a whole article to all the phases of sugar addiction, which we have talked about in office visits in the past.

I honestly thought I'd never live to see the day that CNN, CBS, Fox News, and ABC would agree. After decades of telling us not to eat fat, salt, and red meat and that lack of exercise and pollution of the environment is causing weight gain, the real culprit is sugar. A substance that is more addictive than cocaine has been found to cause all kinds of health problems. Hats off to the big three news networks and Fox News who eventually agreed that sugar is the culprit even with their megabucks advertisers hawking their soda, beer, candy, breakfast cereals, and junk snacks hour after hour during ballgames. They all finally decided to tell the truth!

Before, the implication was that calories cause all these problems, fat causes these problems, and overeating causes these problems. None of that's been proven to be true. The implication is that overweight people are just weak-willed and merely need to eat less and exercise more. This primary mantra has been given out for 50 years and it doesn't hold one ounce of truth. A recent study, found men who consume a 12-ounce sugary drink every day had a 20% higher risk of heart disease compared to men who didn't drink them at all. If sugar is so innocent then how can one soda give us a coronary?

Dr. Dums and I have heard Dr. Robert Lustig speak at our obesity meetings. He's a leading authority on obesity at the University of California, School of Medicine, San Francisco. Dr. Lustig notes that sugar is a poison by itself. He blew the whistle on sugar back in about 2009 & 2010 when he wrote an article called "Sugar: The bitter truth." The article was viewed more than 1 million times over the Internet. In his lecture, he places the blame for obesity squarely on sugar. He also blames sugar for Type II diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, and cancer over the last 50 years.

Throughout volumes of literature, women are told to eat more fruits and vegetables, consume less fat, red meat, and salt, eat smaller portions, and get physical exercise. Media executives rake in billions from the food/beverage ads that bombard us and our kids every single day. Big medicine makes big profits, treating more and more patients for the growing list of sugar diseases. People blame the lazy consumer who now has heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, and an abutting surge of Alzheimer's disease in the early stages of cancer. It is like the Surgeon General telling smokers to cut out cigarettes and take up running while closing his eyes to the fact that nicotine is more addictive than heroin and

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alternately causes lung cancer.

Sugar is more addictive than nicotine. For decades, the tobacco industry argued that nicotine wasn't an additive and that cigarette smoking did not cause lung cancer. Today, it's common knowledge for every medical student and resident physician that walks the face of the earth. Years from now, the dangers of sugar will be obvious and accepted, but we are in the early stages of awareness and the large sugar companies are fighting us like crazy. Just like big tobacco denial, the sugar and beverage organizations are acknowledging that sugar and sweeteners have an addictive side. They stimulate the very part of the brain called the reward center, technically known as the striate nucleus, as does nicotine, cocaine, caffeine, and alcohol. Let's go back and review. Sweets stimulate the release of the mood elevating chemical called dopamine in the brain, which creates feelings of euphoria.

Remember the sugar high? It does exist. Today, we have unprecedented access to substances that always make us feel good; alcohol, pain killers, nicotine, caffeine, sugar, and recreational drugs. So people can get what they need, self-medicating their emotional problems with pain medication. Then we have the self-medicating people who crave sweets, sodas, and carbohydrates called "comfort food." They are self-medicating their emotional problems with sugar and carbohydrates with devastating results. Eating sugar increases body weight, health problems, further lowers your self-esteem, and represses positive emotions such as hope, confidence, and the courage to change your life and do better. Relieving stress with still more sugar turns a situation into a downward spiral that usually ends very badly. Eating sweets and carbohydrates triggers a rush of insulin into your bloodstream, which drives your cravings for the substances even higher. You may remember that insulin's job is to control your blood sugar level because your body knows that too much of it in your bloodstream is very bad for you. When your bloodstream is cleared of glucose, you are hungry and "low blood sugar" makes you tired and sleepy with a foggy brain. What you want to know from us is how to break this cycle, so I will give you a little insight. The easiest way to break this cycle is to eat enough protein. I think you've heard that before. When insulin isn't present to block the release of stored fat, it can be broken down into essential fatty acids, which are released into the bloodstream so that nutrient rich essential fatty acids can feed and nourish your body. You are living off your body's fat, which is exactly what you're supposed to do.

Interestingly, studies of starvation and fasting show that by the third day of not eating, hunger completely subsides and the body receives nutrition from stored fat. Eating that restricts sugar and refined carbohydrates reduce the risk of Type II diabetes, circulatory and heart disease, cancers, stroke and hypertension. If the old adage that you learned in school, "a calorie is a calorie," was correct then the caloric diet restriction would be an effective way for weight loss for the last 25 years. We all know this message fails 95% of the time. Calorie restriction, now commonly known as dieting, completely ignores the underlying biochemistry factors that cause failure. It's not because we are gluttons or lack willpower. For instance, one hundred calories of broccoli, fish or cheese metabolize differently than 100 calories of sugar soda. I think you have probably all heard about how these metabolic differences affect your blood sugar, your hormonal system, and your brain

cyst chemistry. Today, we get most of our calories from refined carbohydrates. The average American is consuming an incredible 200 pounds of sugar and high fructose corn syrup annually, much of it hidden in processed foods, because we fail to read the labels.

The government has tracked the overall sugar consumption in the United States since 1900 as well as the increase of obesity, Type II diabetes, and heart disease. The paths are practically identical. By early 2000, when sugar consumption peaked in United States, one in every three Americans was found to be obese and 14 million are diabetic.

So what's the best defense against sugar? It's high time the medical community and mainstream media man up to what's going on. Sugar has been unmasked as the real killer in the American diet and I'll give you a few tips on how to conquer your sweet tooth:

1. Keep your insulin levels low. The best way to do that is to pass on fruits and juices high in sugar content and avoid potatoes, pasta, and white rice. Stay away from chips and commercial snack foods. Make sure you eat enough protein.
2. Eat real food in general, not food that comes in a bag or box off the shelf. Try to eat food in its natural state as much as possible.
3. Eat protein at every meal. Eat chicken or tuna for lunch. Enjoy some high-quality fish products or other meat for dinner.
4. Always carry water. You can try hot tea and coffee and they're perfectly acceptable. Always avoid diet sodas with artificial sweeteners. These actually increase your hunger and sugar cravings. Stevia sweeteners work the best. (See the latest news release).
5. Behavioral science has found the best way to break a habit is to substitute a good one for the bad habit. Instead of focusing on giving up sugar, pies, cakes, and candy bars, think about eating healthier and about the good benefits that will be yours as you lose weight.

All of us at the Weigh Station are here to help you overcome your addiction. The Bible says "call those things, not as though they were." If you start confessing to yourself that you will not deviate from the program and do exactly what you're supposed to do, your sugar cravings will go away. We have spent eight years working on this and I feel we have it down to a pretty exact science. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask us. As we approach the holidays, you may need to reread this article again. The Bible also says "that no weapon formed against you will prosper and anything that rises up against you will be put down." Start believing in yourselves that you can overcome your addictions. Come out the opposite side for a much healthier and happier you. Happy Thanksgiving.

Chuck Shaffer, M.D.

Is Your Food Making You Sick?

Do you suffer from migraines or other headaches, IBS, chronic diarrhea, heartburn, arthritis, joint or muscle pain, weight imbalances, chronic fatigue, insomnia, skin eruptions or ADD? It could be the food you are eating! Even healthy foods like broccoli can be culprits. After following the Weigh Station program for a few weeks you should start feeling better if you are not suffering from sensitivities, however if these symptoms are still plaguing you, it may be time to consider food sensitivities as a possible culprit.

The Weigh Station is now offering a new service called LEAP or “Lifestyle Eating and Performance”. This service includes Mediator Release Testing or “MRT” as well as counseling designed to heal your gut and improve your symptoms. MRT is a blood test that identifies 150 foods and chemicals that your body may have sensitivities to. It’s like having 150 tests in one! It is the gold standard for food sensitivity testing and has 94.5% sensitivity and 91.8% specificity which means it is quite accurate.

Once your MRT results are back, the LEAP therapist (our dietitian) will meet with you one on one to design a meal plan that will help alleviate your symptoms. Like the Weigh Station program, this meal plan will start off restrictive and overtime be liberalized. Together a diet based on your MRT results will be implemented. You will eat lowest reactive foods for seven days or so, during this time you should notice a significant reduction in your symptoms. Then you will be able to add in slightly more reactive foods for another week. By the third phase, if there is continued improvement in health we add in more foods. You will then move onto a rotation diet and better health.

Please note: This program is NOT a weight loss program but many times patients lose weight due to decreased inflammation.

Why MRT is helpful:

Food sensitivities make a person feel sick because there is a release of chemicals called mediators (such as histamines, prostaglandins, cytokines etc) from white blood cells. The release of mediators is typically triggered by an immune response; however it is the release of the mediators that makes us feel bad, not the immune response itself. The thing that makes food sensitivities complicated is that there are various ways the immune system can respond to hypersensitivity. In addition, the food or foods causing the problems are very hard to identify without MRT testing because they can be dose dependent and or have a delayed onset of symptoms (up to 3 days). MRT is like the GPS of food sensitivities. There is little room for guessing since it tests for so many foods. Of course it’s extremely important to also have a therapist to help interpret your results, past history and other possible cofactors to obtain the best results possible. This is where LEAP counseling comes in.

To schedule an appointment or inquire about the services please email Tricia Foley our Registered Dietitian at: tfoley@weighstation.net.

No Noodle Lasagna

18 servings, provides 1.5 ounces protein and 1 vegetable/serving

Ingredients:

- 3 Large Zucchini (Thinly Sliced)
- 4 Large Summer Squash (Thinly Sliced)
- 1 Large Onion (Thinly Sliced)
- 1 Large Green Bell Pepper (Thinly Sliced)
- 1 Large Red Bell Pepper (Thinly Sliced)
- 1 Tbsp Olive Oil
- Garlic Powder
- 1 Container Low Fat Cottage Cheese
- 1 large glass container of marinated red peppers
- 1/4 Cup Parmesan Cheese
- 1/4 Cup Fresh Basil Leaf
- 1 Bag 2% Mozzarella Cheese

Directions:

- Preheat Oven to 365 Degrees
- Puree red peppers in a blender or food processor until sauce is at desired consistency
- Add 1 Tbsp of olive oil to the bottom of the baking pan.
- Add a layer of squash or zucchini to the bottom of the pan, on top of the olive oil.
- Next, add: pepper sauce, basil, 1/4 cup of 2% mozzarella cheese, 1/4 cup cottage cheese, 1 Tbsp of Parmesan, 1/2 Tsp garlic powder, sliced peppers, and onions. Repeat this 4 times, but alternating the squash and zucchini.
- After building up the four layers, top dish with Parmesan and basil
- Bake 50-60 minutes. The Cheese should be golden brown.
- The edges may have extra juice from the vegetables and olive oil. Lightly tip the pan into the sink and drain the extra liquid.

*Ground meat may be added to this dish if desired or this can be a side dish during Thanksgiving.