

## 10 Tips for Managing Sweetness

How do we reconcile our enjoyment of sweet foods and beverages within a balanced lifestyle?

All foods, including sugar, when consumed in excess, may lead to caloric imbalance and can contribute to obesity, diabetes, tooth decay and uneven blood sugar levels. And a diet with too much emphasis on sweetness may be deficient in other nutrients, even if your total calorie consumption is within a healthy limit.

But research shows our taste for sweet things is innate, a biological need hardwired as part of our survival instinct.

This means that a prohibitive approach simply doesn't work. The answer? You have to manage sweetness, building it into your diet and lifestyle in a way that makes sense for you.

Rather than feeling guilty about enjoying sweet foods and beverages, it's best to understand your pleasure as something very natural. This attitude translates into balancing, rather than banishing, sweet tastes in our daily lives.

Here are a few useful tips to help you achieve and maintain this healthy state of affairs:

### **Avoid Labeling**

If you get into the habit of calling sweet treats 'bad' or 'evil' or 'off-limits', you are essentially trying to override - rather than manage - a natural human impulse. It's okay to accept, even appreciate, sweetness...in moderation!

### **Budget for Sweet**

A great way to "make peace" with sweetness is to create a "calorie budget" that allows room for your sweet tooth. You can give yourself permission to consume sweets, but you **MUST** plan for it. So burn off calories with exercise before or after consumption and give yourself bonuses for room created by exercising, or just ensure that your consumption is in line with your daily calorie budget.

## **Move It**

Adding more physical activity to your day can help to control your appetite. Enjoying an activity you love works in a few ways to manage sweetness: it takes your mind off eating, can actually reduce your appetite for overall calories, including those from sugar - and burns calories to help manage your weight.

## **Keep it Balanced**

Balanced meals tend to make us feel full and satisfied with fewer calories than unbalanced ones. Make sure your meals and snacks contain all four food groups, including:

- Vegetables and fruit
- Grain products
- Milk and alternatives
- Meat and alternatives

## **Don't Starve Yourself**

Even if you feel you can get by without breakfast, a missed lunch or a skimpy supper, try to keep up a regular intake of calories and nutrients throughout the day. When you feel really hungry your blood sugar drops to the point where you're more likely to overeat sweeter foods that deliver a quick energy boost.

## **Let Yourself Enjoy**

Enjoy your sweetness-rich foods and drinks when the mood hits, in moderate portions. This will avoid temptation to overdo it later on. If you've allowed yourself a sliver of delicious chocolate cake at a birthday party, you're much less likely to reach for a huge slice after the event!

## **Replace**

Low or zero calorie sugar replacements can play a useful role in reducing caloric intake. While satisfying a sweet craving. Together with the other practices outlined here, consuming foods containing non-nutritive sweeteners such as Aspartame, Sucralose or natural Stevia, can help satisfy your sweet tooth while lightening the calorie load.



## Re-Train Your Sweet Tooth

If you find yourself adding teaspoon after teaspoon of sugar or low-calorie sweetener to your hot drinks and foods, you may have simply become used to *excessive* sweetness. It's possible to 're-train' yourself to enjoy sweetness in lower quantities. Try cutting the sugar in your favourite recipes down to two-thirds, or having a third less than you normally have in your coffee or on your breakfast cereal. Over time, you will become more sensitive to sweetness, and it will take less to satisfy you.

## Add Some Spice

Deepening the flavour of your sweet dishes boosts the satisfaction you get from sweets that are already in the dish. Adding complex, spicy flavours has been shown to be helpful in reducing the desire for sugar, so you're satisfied with less sweetness. Try adding cinnamon, cloves, natural vanilla or star anise to your muffin, cake, fruit salad or rice pudding recipes.

## Eat for the Right Reasons

If you find yourself eating and drinking large quantities of sweets during moments of 'emotional hunger' (loneliness, stress or sadness for example), get into the habit of asking, "Do I really want this or am I just trying to feel better?" If you're bored or nervous, sweetness is an easy quick-fix but a diverting activity like talking to a friend is the better solution!

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