

10

STRATEGIES TO HELP ELIMINATE SUGAR CRAVINGS !

The following 10 strategies can help you to eliminate or minimize your cravings for simple sugars. Keep in mind that sugar cravings could be the result of blood sugar imbalance, nutritional chemistry, food group imbalance, stress-related or psychological reasons that drive us to Sweetville.

Study each of the strategies below and figure if it applies to your eating or lifestyle. Reducing your desire--or addiction for sugar--should not require Herculean will power. Becoming conscious of the many factors that stimulate sugar cravings can actually make taming your sweet tooth a piece of cake—so to speak. Please see my books (see bio, below) for further reference.

1. REDUCE SALT & PRODUCTS WITH SALT

The need for dietary salt from natural sources (sun-dried sea—not mine--salt) is important. A lack of salt can cause fatigue, stimulate the desire to overeat and often result in cravings for animal protein. Today, there are an abundance of good quality salt products where you can receive benefit from their moderate use, such as solar-evaporated sea salt, miso soybean paste, and natural soy sauce (Tamari or Shoyu). Often, people who are eating animal protein are getting excessive salt from either the processing of the meat or the existing salt within the animal tissues. This can create enormous cravings for sweet. Matter of fact, most of the fast food sold in restaurants is basically meats (burgers) and sugar (milk shakes, apple pie, etc.).

Sudden thirst and a craving for sweet foods is one of the most reliable indicators of excess dietary salt or animal protein.

2. ELIMINATE OR REDUCE ANIMAL PROTEIN

The four basic food group propaganda was force-fed to the American public in the 1940s along with the myth that animal protein *must* be a dietary staple. Nothing can be further from the truth. The meat and potatoes mentality has to re-think its philosophy since established research shows excess animal protein can lead to a number of diseases including colon and prostate cancer. In fact, in addition to the ethical aspect of animal food consumption, there are chemical, ecological, hygienic and numerous other reasons to try eliminating or dramatically reducing animal protein. If you have a big sweet tooth, you'll find avoiding sugar much less of an effort with the reduction or absence of animal protein.

3. REDUCE FOOD VOLUME

Overeating can lead to fatigue, sluggishness and moodiness. In this condition, you're more likely to crave a stimulant like sugar, or caffeinated beverages. Eating more frequently (see #4, below) will allow you to reduce overeating with a minimum of effort.

4. EAT MORE FREQUENTLY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

This is one of the most common reasons for sugar cravings--particularly at night. By skipping meals or waiting long periods between them, you cease supplying your blood with a steady stream of glucose. This makes the blood sugar gradually lower and by the time you finally get around to eating, your blood sugar levels and muscle needs for sugar are demanding something sweet. In this scenario you're also more likely to end up overeating or craving something fatty, as a compensation for sugar. Fat, as a buffer, can temporarily delay cravings, but are not a healthy choice for combating sugar cravings. If this lower blood sugar profile fits your profile, don't wait more than 3-1/2 to 4 hours between meals.

5. AVOID EATING PRIOR TO BED

If your body is digesting when it requires needed rest, your sleep quality will suffer. Eating close to bed time can create a restless sleep with excessive dreaming and fatigue upon awakening. This makes sense because you've been digesting half the night! This also partially accounts for our morning coffee addiction. We're so tired when we awaken, we have to have a stimulant to get in gear. Good deep sleep will usually produce wide-awake days. Eat a light evening dinner at least 2-1/2 to 3 hours before retiring.

6. AVOID SUGAR

This may sound obvious, however, continuing to eat simple sugars results in a falling blood sugar and in turn, stimulates the craving for *more* sugar—and the cycle continues. Even though fruit is a simple sugar, switching to fruit, particularly season fibrous fruit (apples, pears, peaches, apricots, melons, etc.) *instead* of grabbing something sugary, is a good *first step*. Fruits are less concentrated than refined sugar and the skin fiber slows entry into the blood. Keep in mind that tropical fruits usually have a higher sugar content.

7. EXERCISE MODERATELY, BUT CONSISTENTLY

Daily exercise increases circulation and strengthens will power. Brisk outdoor or indoor (treadmill) walking, biking, light jogging, rowing etc., can increase your will and decrease your need for sugar. However, with extreme exercise, you can end up increasing your craving for sugar! It's a balancing act. Try to get 20 to 30 minutes daily of some type of pleasurable and repetitive exercise done at a *minimum* of 4 times per week, ideally, 6 times weekly. Getting more exercise will also strengthen your will and brighten your disposition.

8. EMPHASIZE NATURAL WHOLE COMPLEX-CARBOHYDRATES

If your daily diet includes whole grains (brown rice, quinoa, oats, buckwheat, millet, barley, etc.), vegetables (roots, greens and round vegetables such as squashes, cabbages, etc.) as a primary fuel, you'll find you automatically crave less sugar. Emphasizing sweet vegetables such as carrots, cooked onions, corn, cabbage, parsnips, squashes, etc., can also add a natural sweetness to meals that satisfies. Including a small amount of beans in salads, soups, dips, as a side dish, or as a spread, increases your complex carbohydrate ratio so you will automatically reduce sugar cravings, effortlessly.

9. BEWARE OF PSYCHOLOGICAL TRIGGERS

The many psychological associations we connect with food have a powerful influence. Beware of family associations, movie rituals, familiar restaurants, childhood habits, etc., we are bombarded with stimuli to seek the familiar. Do you really need a soda at the movie? Careful thinking about such habits reduces mechanical impulses. Bring a beverage or purchase a flavored tea, or water. Challenge habits that do not serve you.

10. DON'T SUPPRESS FEELINGS

This does not mean that you have to broadcast every feeling--only those that matter, and to those who really matter to you. Food indulgence, especially with sweets, is a convenient way to anesthetize uncomfortable feelings. While sugar is known to provide sensory pleasure, or temporary mental relief from stressful events, it is also known to hinder your energy levels and mental clarity. In the long run, this makes your emotional coping ability more compromised. Eat less, express more!



VERNE VARONA

Over the last forty years, Verne Varona has become known as one of the most captivating and dynamic health educators in the country who uses humor, insight and practical science to improve and enrich the lives of many. He studied Traditional Chinese Medicine and nutrition at the East West Foundation of Boston, Massachusetts (1970-1974). Verne's first book, *Nature's Cancer-Fighting Foods* (original printing: 2001) was released in a completely revised and updated version in May 2014, from Perigee Books/Penguin Group. Verne's second book, *Macrobiotics for Dummies* (May, 2009—Wiley Publications), is part of the internationally popular *Dummies* series and is a comprehensive work embracing a flexible, multi-cultural health perspective on body, mind and spirit. Verne is a native New Yorker currently working on several multi-media projects.