



Reducing Sugar Intake

WHY MAKE THIS PLEDGE?

The UK Government recommend that adults limit their intake of free sugars to a maximum of 30g per day. Free sugars are sugars that have been added to foods, such as sweets, and those that are present in honey, syrups, fruit juice, smoothies etc. Free sugar refers to the sugar content being outside the cells of the food.

Many of us exceed this amount regularly and may experience sugar cravings. Sugar triggers parts of the brain that is linked to pleasure, addiction and reward and it's said to have addictive characteristics.

If you experience things like craving sweets and snacks, feeling shaky, experiencing spikes of energy after eating, or sudden fatigue after eating, or have any concerns regarding your health and/or your relationship with sugar then **please seek the advice of a medical professional, such as your GP. Please note YSJActive are not medically trained and this document is for general information only.**

HOW MUCH SUGAR DO YOU EAT?

Sugar is in so many food products it can be very hard to avoid, especially as it's not always called "sugar". For example, that jar of Fajita seasoning in your cupboard may have Maltodextrin and Sugar in.

Many of us don't know how much sugar we consume each day, so working this out can be a great starting point. Food tracking apps can help you analyse how much you're consuming. For it to be accurate you need to add everything that you ingest, even if it is just one sweet.

BENEFITS

Reducing your sugar intake and managing it effectively, has a range of benefits such as:

- Reducing the risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- Reducing the risk of becoming insulin resistant
- Reducing the risk of becoming obese (overall diet is a factor, not just sugar)
- Improved energy levels, sugar has been linked to fatigue
- Improved mood, some studies have found a relationship between eating free sugar and depression
- Reduced risk of dental issues like caries
- Reduced inflammation in body tissues

TIPS

- Cold turkey or gradual reduction? If you're planning to reduce your sugar intake you need to decide the best way for you. Cold turkey - cutting out all free sugar straight away, or a gradual reduction where you cut free sugar from your diet daily.
- Be aware you may go through a "Sugar Detox" - as our bodies adjust to less sugar we may experience things like headaches, changes in mood and concentration, cravings and fatigue. These side effects are said to usually go after 10 days, so be prepared for this.
- Read the label - know what's in the food you're eating so you can make the choice to avoid free sugars. It may also be helpful to learn the different terms for sugar.
- Make sure you have healthy snacks to hand
- Ensure you stay hydrated. Water is sugar and calorie free and being adequately hydrated may help with sugar cravings
- Look at your diet and identify how and when you're consuming free sugar, for example are you starting the day with sugary cereal. This can also help you to make quick cuts to the amount of free sugar you're having, like limiting fizzy drinks, reducing the amount of sugar in your tea/coffee or making healthy swaps like having porridge or eggs for breakfast instead of sugary cereal.
- If you identify a specific pattern to consuming free sugar, such as in the afternoon or while watching TV on an evening, then try to break this by doing something else like going for a walk, drinking a glass of water or starting a hobby. If you're hungry then opt for a healthy snack or meal.
- Identify healthy swaps for the things in your diet that are high in free sugars.
- Get sufficient sleep - being well rested can help us make healthy nutrition choices, increase energy and concentration levels and reduce levels of stress, making us less likely to consume sugary foods
- Cook using unprocessed ingredients - this makes it easier to avoid free sugars, which can be in spice mixes, meat, sauces, prepared vegetables etc.
- Remember that any reduction is helpful