

# Sugar-craving solutions

Try these tips from nutritionist Charlotte Watts to wean yourself off your sugar habit

Giving up sugar 'cold turkey' can initially lead to poor glucose supply to the brain, which causes poor serotonin regulation and a subsequent drop in mood. This can happen around three or four days after giving up sugar and can lead to binges and cravings. This is temporary and will pass as your system gets used to slower-release forms of fuel to the body and brain, but you may want to time this for over a weekend if you know you have an ingrained sugar habit.

Use the following suggestions for lasting change:

- We typically have a blood sugar low at 4pm when traditionally the tea and cakes were wheeled out. If this is your point of least resistance, eat a healthy snack at this time or just before. Although less snacking overall is the ideal scenario, it's preferable to choose a better snack at the right time than mainline the sugar later.
- Constant cravings for sugar can indicate that there aren't enough healthy, good-quality proteins and fats in your diet, as these register satisfaction in the brain, whereas carbohydrates do not. Be particularly aware of

this if you're a vegetarian or (especially) a vegan.

- Xylitol is the best sugar substitute choice, with some positive effects seen on weight loss, but it can still keep a sweet tooth alive. Substitute it for sugar in tea or coffee, then wean yourself off it bit by bit over a few weeks.
- Use natural, slow-release sugars that provide a sweet taste, like unsweetened coconut, ground almond, natural vanilla essence and unsweetened apple puree. Coconut contains plant-saturated fats called medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) that help satisfy any need for sugar as they provide a dense energy source. Use as unsweetened desiccated coconut or flakes.
- Use cinnamon as much as possible: it contains a bioflavonoid called MHCP (methylhydroxychalcone polymer) that mimics insulin, actively moving sugar into cells for energy and sensitizing insulin receptors. A teaspoon a day helps balance blood-sugar levels in people with diabetes. It's highly effective at telling the brain that you've eaten something sweet, with positive rather than



negative consequences. Add it to coffee, tea, yoghurt, berries and curries.

- A small portion of starchy carbs, such as new potatoes or sweet potatoes, can be included at dinner if you're suffering late-night binges. You can then wean yourself off this as you regulate energy and cravings while giving up refined sugars.
- If you really need a sweet hit, choose a banana – they calm by helping levels of the anti-anxiety neurotransmitter gammaaminobutyric acid (GABA) and serotonin. Full-fat plain yoghurt with banana, cinnamon and coconut can satisfy.

**Adapted from *The De-Stress Effect* by Charlotte Watts (£12.99, [Hay House UK](#))**

