



Why would anyone want to go on a sugar-free diet?

There are several reasons. Firstly if you are diabetic, managing your insulin levels is a lot easier with a sugar-free diet. Secondly, if you have candida, you need to eliminate sugars. Thirdly, it can be part of a low reactive diet, or a diet for those wanting to lose weight, or support their liver detox. There are lots of reasons.

How would I cope?

If you crave sugar, you may already have a chromium deficiency, and taking a chromium supplement will assist. Even if you don't, you will probably miss sugar if you're used to having it regularly, but your body has adaptive mechanisms and quite soon you'll get used to much less sweetness.

Doesn't sugar have anything going for it?

If you chew sugar cane that's just been cut from the plant, it is a wholefood and has various nutrients. But the white or brown crystallised substance we buy called sugar is a refined carbohydrate which stresses our liver and has little or anything to recommend it from the point of view of health.



Could I use artificial sweeteners?

Preferably not, as there are few that aren't toxic to your liver. Some also have side effects. But there is a herb called Stevia, which is completely safe, not related to sugar, very sweet and has no calories. You can buy it at health food shops. There is also a product called Xylitol which may also be usable. Rice syrup and barley malt are also natural sweeteners which could go in stewed fruit, for example.

Fruit is pretty sweet. Can I have it?

That depends on the reason for your diet. Generally you could have two pieces per day, but not grapes or fruits that are very sweet and have high fructose levels. If you have a serious disease such as cancer, glucose can feed the cancer cells, so your practitioner will have to make that decision. If you have Candida, then the answer is no.

How about honey or maple syrup?

That again depends on the reason for your diet. Honey and maple syrup are natural wholefoods, and as such are not bad for you. But if you are on a gluten-free, sugar-free diet, they may not be allowed. Again, your practitioner will have to advise.



What about eating out?

That depends what you like to eat. If you normally grab a muffin and coffee on the way to work, you'll need to change your habits. Take some nuts and seeds with you, and some herb teas and stevia to have at work instead. Restaurants will be tricky, and you may need to call before you book to see if they can accommodate you. It is not hard to find diabetic meals, but some will contain artificial sweeteners which aren't good for you. But if your health is otherwise good, the occasional artificial sweetener won't kill you.

What should I do when I do the shopping?

Read the labels, and avoid products listing sugar, cane sugar, rock sugar, sucrose, fructose, glucose, corn syrup, and artificial sweeteners.

Are there any good books out there?

These are available from booksellers, and you could also search your local library.

Susan O'Brien: *Gluten-free, Sugar-free Cooking*. Marlowe, 2006

Kelly Keough: *Sugar-Free Gluten-Free Baking and Desserts: Recipes for Healthy and Delicious Cookies, Cakes, Muffins, Scones, Pies, Puddings, Breads and Pizzas*. Ulysses Press, 2009





What to eat:

Vegetables and salads, lean meat, fish, fruits (max. 2 servings a day), eggs and low fat dairy products in moderation, unsweetened drinks eg. tea, coffee, plain/mineral water, sugar-free soft drinks, miso, legumes, rice, cereals and grains, pasta, salt, pepper, vinegar, spices and herbs. Have an emphasis on unrefined carbohydrates, protein and good fats.

Foods high in sugar - what not to eat:

Table sugar, brown sugar, rock sugar, cane sugar, golden syrup, treacle, jam, marmalade, honey, sweets, chocolates, ice-cream, fudge, cakes and biscuits, sweetened desserts, jellies, mousses, puddings, canned fruits in syrup, fruit juices, fizzy soft drinks and sweetened packet drinks, flavoured milks, sweet wine and sherry, glucose and foods containing glucose, condensed milk, commercial sauces, spreads and mayonnaises. Also check many canned savoury foods, such as baked beans for added sugar. Also avoid artificial sweeteners, as many are toxic to the liver. Some diabetic products can be high in fat and use artificial sweeteners, so you will need to read all labels carefully.



Meal suggestions

Breakfasts

Porridge cooked from rolled oats or millet. When cooked you could add slivered almonds and rice syrup and serve with rice milk.

Brown rice with miso sauce and shallots.

Wholewheat biscuits (check the label for sugar content) with nuts, seeds, milk and rice syrup.

Boiled or poached egg on lightly buttered toast (check bread label for sugar content)

Rye toast with nut butters or hommous

If you are allowed fruit, then add a banana or apple to your cereal or munch it separately.

Lunches

A pasta or rice meal with sauce (check for sugar in the sauce; it is common in tomato sauce and loaded into low salt products).

Salad sandwich with egg, cheese, fish or lean meat

Home made soup

Three bean salad with green veg and hommous



Dinners (use spices and herbs for variety)

Stirfried veg with grilled fish or chicken

Brown rice with cheese and veg

Steamed veg with lean meat

Spaghetti bolognaise (check any commercial sauces used)

Lentil casserole with veg and/or salad

Snacks

Nuts and seeds, unsweetened carob buds. Fruit if you haven't already had two pieces. You can make many snacks to enjoy. There are a lot of websites with sugar-free snack recipes. Simply visit them and use stevia instead of artificial sweeteners. Or visit your health food store for ideas and products.

Drinks

Use stevia or xylitol to sweeten herb teas, green or black tea if required; unsweetened soy milk or rice milk, vegetable juices, mineral or still water.



Fructose

Beware of buying packs of fructose (fruit sugar). As part of fruit in a balanced diet, it's OK, but taking fructose out of fruit and using it in place of sucrose (sugar) can contribute to the onset of a number of diseases. It's not a healthy alternative to sugar.