

## Kick the Carb Queen Habits!

Sometimes I feel like I live in Willy Wonka's Factory. What I mean is, everywhere I look, I see sugar. It is utilized as an additive to many foods, most drinks, and of course in cakes, cookies, and pies. Empower yourself with a few simple rules to help reduce your cravings for sugar and carbohydrates. Gain control of your inner Oompah Loompahs!

### ✓ **Educate Yourself**

- **A sugar by any other name is still sugar.** Sugar hides in various foods with many different names. It's not just the cookies, cake, candy, and desserts that you need to eliminate or limit. You would be surprised how many creams, sauces, and condiments contain sugar. Make sure you read food labels and be aware of sugar's disguises such as: corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, galactose, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, maltodextrin, maltose, and sucrose.
- **The glycemic index (GI).** The glycemic index is a measure of the effect of carbohydrates on blood sugar levels. Carbohydrates that break down quickly and release glucose rapidly into the bloodstream have a high GI; carbohydrates that break down more slowly, releasing glucose more gradually into the bloodstream, have a low GI (Wikipedia). Some examples: Apples, Oranges, Lettuce, Tomatoes – Low GI /// Potatoes, Pasta, Snickers, Peanut Butter Cups – High GI.
- **Serotonin.** Serotonin acts as a neurotransmitter, a type of chemical that helps relay signals from one area of the brain to another (WebMD). Although serotonin has various functions, its role in regards to mood regulation can be greatly affected by carbohydrate intake. Studies have shown that eating carbohydrates which are known to have a high glycemic index will raise the serotonin levels in the brain. In essence, if you eat too many foods that are high on the glycemic index, your serotonin levels end up on a roller coaster ride. This increases your desire to eat more high glycemic foods to increase your serotonin levels after they drop.
- **Focus on low glycemic foods.** Your blood sugar, serotonin, and energy levels can become more stable without highs and lows if you focus on foods that are low to moderate on the glycemic index. This can help reduce your body's desire to become a Carboholic.

✓ **Eat More Fruit.** Fruit is nature's sweet candy. This is a great way to help curb your cravings for the bad stuff by satiating your sweet tooth. There are many low glycemic choices such as apples, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, pears, peaches, grapefruit, oranges, etc.

✓ **Avoid artificial sweeteners.** Many experts believe that artificial sweeteners stimulate your appetite and increase your cravings for sugar. Furthermore, many studies have link artificial sweeteners to cancer, migraines, depression, thyroid problems, and weight gain, as well as other health related problems. Avoid or limit your sugar and artificial sweetener intake and you won't go wrong. Focus on natural foods and products!

✓ **Try Stevia.** Stevia is a natural sweetener that comes from a plant that is known for its sweet leaves. There are no calories and no affect on blood sugar. Although this herb may be hard to bake with, having some in your water or coffee may help you kick the sugar habit. And by the way, there are plenty of stevia recipe books readily available to you. Stock up now – it can be your ally and help you regain control of your diet.

✓ **If it's white, don't bite!** Be careful of how much white flour, white rice, and white potatoes you eat. These foods have a negative effect on blood sugar similar to other high glycemic foods and cause your energy levels to fall fast. Eating too much of these can make it harder to kick the carb habit. Stay with wheat, oats, and bran in order to maintain good, stable energy levels.

- ✓ **Avoid Desserts.** Just because you're a guest at a friend's house for dinner doesn't mean you have to eat two servings of the host's famous dessert. Or if you were asked to bring a dessert to a social gathering, you could make something other than cheesecake or crème brûlée. How about something that is lower in calories, uses stevia as a sweetener, and or has some mixture of fresh fruit? Who says we have to eat or prepare traditional desserts? Try to avoid or at least limit your dessert intake as treat for good behavior. Make desserts a special occasion.
  
- ✓ **Eat sweet potatoes, red potatoes, and brown rice with meals.** These are the foods to replace the white foods with to help release energy slower into our blood stream maintaining and stabilizing our blood sugar for longer periods of time.
  
- ✓ **Drink More Water.** Although it may be boring, water can help your body release fat, reduce your appetite, and of course there are no calories. Be careful of juices, sodas, and Gatorade. Most of these have a high glycemic index as well as too much sugar which of course can increase your desire for more.

This doesn't mean that you should never touch sugar, carbohydrates, or the so-called bad carbs, you just need to avoid them a majority of the time and treat yourself here and there. So cheer up like Willy Wonka's Charlie because you now have your golden ticket! Okay, Okay, it's not the golden ticket to the candy factory but it is your ticket to help you defeat your Sugar and Carbohydrate addiction!

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