



Taste the sweetness of life - especially without sugar

Sugar is an addictive substance and, if consumed in large quantities, can also alter your emotional experience. You may be familiar with the desire to reach for a sweet comforter when under stress of any kind or when faced with an emotional challenge. Or to reward yourself with something sweet when you have completed a task (did your parents reward you with sweets for desired behavior when you were a child?) If you have regularly given in to these cravings and suddenly give up harmful sugars, you will experience withdrawal symptoms, which not only manifest themselves in blood sugar levels, but also in mood swings.

Sugar provides carbohydrates that are converted into energy in your body, which we need to maintain all organ functions and to be mentally and physically active. Men, who often work harder physically than women or have a high calorie requirement due to sporting activities and cover this with sweet convenience products, are more prone to anxiety, depression, brain fog and a lack of mental performance [1].

Where does the craving for sweets come from?

Our ancestors obtained a large part of their energy from sweet fruits. However, their sugar also ensured that fat was stored in the body for bad times, thus ensuring constant performance (and thus self-preservation). No wonder that the craving for sweets is a kind of survival mechanism, which has lost its necessity in modern times because we are much less physically active and food is always available.

Natural sugars, such as those found in fruits, vegetables or whole foods, are “polysaccharides” that are metabolized by your body in such a way that they provide energy but do no harm [2]. If these sugars are isolated (e.g. as “fructose”), these properties change [3] when they are added to finished products (e.g. drinks). Refined (processed) sugar increases the risk of numerous health problems, such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, dementia, cancer, heart disease, tooth decay and even increases the risk of death [4]. If you have already developed type 2 diabetes, your manhood suffers [5], which in turn affects your emotional life. The environment in your gut, where 80 % of your immune system is located, changes because harmful parasites (mainly the intestinal fungus *Candida albicans*, whose excessive presence can be seen in cravings for sweets as well as bloating and abdominal pain after sugary foods) feed on sugar and then multiply in an unregulated manner. Your gut microbiome consists of numerous bacterial strains with different characteristics that communicate with each other and work together harmoniously when eating a healthy diet. If this environment is disturbed, your emotional state and your thinking are also impaired, as there is a close connection between your gut, head and nervous system.

How can you tell if you are addicted to sugar?

- “Sugar rituals”, e.g. cookies with tea or a “bedtime snack”, are important parts of your day.
- If you lose one of these rituals, you feel physically and mentally uncomfortable, find it harder to concentrate and try to find a “substitute”, e.g. smoking a cigarette or drinking a coffee.

- When you come back to sugary foods later, you eat even more of them than before.

Sugar increases our happiness hormones. A chocolate bar makes you believe that you have just experienced something happy, e.g. an unexpected pay rise or the first kiss from your dream partner or the successful completion of a project.

You can avoid blood sugar fluctuations, which can also trigger sugar cravings, by eating natural foods, sticking to regular eating times and avoiding isolated carbohydrates. A fast and high intake of sugar overactivates your pancreas to release insulin to transport the sugar from the blood into the cells. This immediately leads to hypoglycaemia, which in turn can result in nervousness, poor concentration, aggression, irritability and sudden mood swings. The next hunger attack is inevitable and a vicious circle begins. I'm not talking about type 1 diabetics here, who have to avoid hypoglycaemia at all costs because of the risk of fainting or tachycardia.

How do you escape the sugar trap?

- Avoid all sugary drinks and processed foods containing sugar.
- Prefer complex to isolated carbohydrates. Base your choice of food on the respective "glycemic index", for which there is plenty of information on the Internet.
- Caffeine and alcohol promote blood sugar fluctuations, so "enjoy" in moderation.
- Avoid flavor enhancers or ready-made spice mixtures.
- You may be eating too little protein. If you spice up your meals with sprouts or nuts, they not only taste better, but also supplement any missing proteins.
- Flatulence always indicates an imbalance in your intestines. It is worth cleansing your intestines and then rebuilding a healthy intestinal flora.

Conclusion: If you have noticed that you are mainly consuming sugary foods for psychological reasons, try out the tips mentioned above for a few weeks and observe how you feel. The stumbling blocks that emerge, but also the "aha moments" are worth the self-experiment [7]. Not only your physical health, but also your emotional life will benefit if you largely avoid sugar. Become the master of your mental well-being again [6] by naturally increasing your serotonin levels. Spending time in the sun increases the level of this happiness hormone. Enjoy the summer!

Literature:

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