

Making Everything Easier!™

GETTING STARTED GUIDE

Living Low-Sugar

FOR
DUMMIES®

A Wiley Brand

Simple, effective strategies to help you

- Live life with less sugar
- Feel more energy
- Boost your immune system
- Jump-start yourself on the road to weight loss
- Control and prevent serious health conditions

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Living Low-Sugar

Today, more and more people are trying to live life with less sugar. Getting off sugar gives you a jump-start down the road toward weight loss, improved energy, better immune system function, and superior nutrition.



First Three Days: Preparing for the Low-Sugar Lifestyle

In small amounts, sugar is an innocuous substance. Every cell in your body needs sugar (glucose) to survive and function, so your digestive system breaks down the carbohydrates you eat into glucose to use as fuel. A major problem with the modern diet is that sugar is present in enormous amounts instead of in the small amounts found in natural foods. Your body isn't designed to handle the massive load of sugar that the modern diet thrusts upon you.

Understanding the connection between carbs and sugar

Carbohydrates are your body's major fuel source. They all break down into blood glucose, which your body uses for fuel, but they react differently in your body depending on their type. Carbs come in two varieties:

- ✔ Simple carbohydrates, which contain one or two sugar units
- ✔ Complex carbohydrates, which contain multiple sugar units

As a general rule, eating complex carbs, such as fibrous vegetables like greens and beans and whole-grain starches like brown rice, quinoa, and whole wheat, is healthier and more in keeping with the low-sugar lifestyle. For more on how your body digests carbs and sugar, see *Glycemic Index Diet For Dummies* or *Diabetes For Dummies*.

Knowing what to avoid

The biggest sugar bombs in the food supply are sweetened beverages, candy, and baked goods. Those account for approximately three-fourths of the total sugar that people consume. So by cutting out junk food like that, you can easily reduce your sugar consumption by 75 percent!

But foods generally considered healthy — such as dried fruit, vitamin water, and 100-percent fruit juice — often have far more sugar than you'd expect. And many foods that seem like they shouldn't have added sugar, such as marinara sauce or bread, also have an excess amount of added sugar. So you have to examine food labels if you want to keep your sugar consumption low.



Large amounts of sugar, even those billed as “more natural” such as honey, agave, beet sugar, or raw sugar, are still unhealthy. And sugar isn’t always in the list of ingredients. Here are some other names for sugar that you may not recognize: barley malt, dehydrated cane juice, dextrose, evaporated cane juice, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, maltodextrin, molasses, sucrose. You should also avoid artificial sweeteners such as aspartame, MSG, and sucralose.

Getting off sugar without driving yourself crazy

Despite what you may believe, getting off sugar and eating a healthier diet don’t require superhuman discipline, some infomercial’s “secret” pills, or a lifetime dedicated to eating like a rabbit. Try these easy steps to begin your journey:

- ✔ Keep sugar and junk food out of your house. You can’t eat what you don’t have! Remove the obvious culprits like soda, candy, brownies, cake, and pastries; also get rid of fruit juice, white flour products, dried fruit, energy drinks, and anything with the word syrup in the first five ingredients.
- ✔ Eat enough during the day. See the next section for tips on how to eat healthy when avoiding sugar.
- ✔ Get enough sleep. Lack of sleep, stress, and sugar cravings create a vicious circle of frustration and fatigue. Stress keeps you up at night, so during the day you walk around exhausted, which increases your desire to use sugar as a convenient pick-me-up.
- ✔ Stop eating fat-free. Manufacturers of fat-free foods typically add more sugar and artificial ingredients to make up for the missing fat, so you do your body a favor if you stick to natural foods instead of fat-free, processed products.
- ✔ Get regular exercise. Exercise has more health benefits than anything else on the planet, period. Regular exercise helps stave off sugar cravings, boosts your energy, and tones your muscles.
- ✔ Learn to identify and manage triggers and cravings. Many people reach for something sweet under certain circumstances, like when you feel stressed, lonely, hungry, or tired.
- ✔ Don’t give up when you fall off the wagon. All you have to work with is what you choose to do right now, so don’t beat yourself up about the fact that you’ve been less than perfect in the past.
- ✔ One of the common techniques for attempting to reduce carbohydrate intake is to eliminate gluten from the diet because some people have an easier time cutting back on their total carb intake if they stop eating wheat.





First Week: Your Healthy Eating Journey

In order to avoid the health risks posed by excess sugar consumption, create a new, healthy nutrition system for yourself (and for your family, if you're feeding them too). A nutrition foundation starts with the three macronutrients (protein, carbohydrates, and fats) and water. These are the big four that you can't live without.

The macronutrients are the components of foods that supply you with calories to stay alive and with raw materials to maintain and renew your cells, muscles, organs, brain, and all the other tissues.



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Healthy eating at a glance

What you eat is the biggest determinant of your health, so make smart, healthy choices. Your body deserves it! Here are the basics of a healthy, sugar-free eating plan:

1. Eat sensible portions of nutrient-rich foods every three to four hours:
 - Healthy fats — fish oil, nuts, olive oil
 - Healthy protein — whey, wild-caught fish, eggs and meat from pasture-fed animals, non-GMO soy
 - Lots of plants (low-sugar carbohydrates) — dark and brightly colored vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains are generally considered to be the most nutrient-rich plant foods
2. Minimize consumption of highly processed foods.
3. At every meal, eat a protein and a plant. Don't eat too much at one time.
4. Eat breakfast every day.
5. Drink at least 64 ounces of water throughout the day.
6. Don't eat too much food at night — eat to fuel what you plan to do for the next four hours.

Managing calories

Just counting the number of calories you take in isn't a true indicator of your health — or even whether you'll really lose weight.

Take two subjects as examples: Woman A splits up 1,200 calories of vegetables and lean protein into five meals every day. Woman B doesn't eat during the day and then gobbles 1,200 calories' worth of donuts every night before bed. These two women will have very different bodies and health profiles, even though they both eat the same number of calories every day. A calorie is not just a calorie!



To stay healthy and lean, be sure to take in most of your calories from high nutrient foods, not empty calories (calories without nutrition value).

Portion distortion: Understanding how much is too much

Portions and calorie content have risen consistently over the decades, and Americans have the waists to prove it! To become accustomed to what a normal serving size is, put out your usual portion of food, measure it, and then compare your serving size to what's on the nutrition label. You may be surprised (or maybe horrified?) to find that your "normal" portion of pasta or breakfast cereal is actually three or four servings!



To become more skilled at eyeballing portions, refer to this handy list until judging your portion sizes becomes second nature:

- ✓ Baseball or computer mouse = a serving of starch like pasta, potatoes, or rice
- ✓ Compact disc = a serving of bread
- ✓ Deck of cards = a serving of meat or fish
- ✓ Golf ball = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup (40 g), a serving of nuts
- ✓ Half your thumb (knuckle to tip) = 1 teaspoon
- ✓ Tennis ball = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup (80 g)
- ✓ Your fist = a serving of fruit

Substitutes for some of your favorite sugary snacks

Table 3-1 can help you make some smart substitutions in your day-to-day food decisions.

Table 3-1 Substituting for Sugary Carbs

<i>Instead of This</i>	<i>Eat This</i>
White pasta	Brown rice pasta or whole-wheat pasta
Fruit juice	Green tea
Coffee with sugar	Coffee with stevia
Jelly	Strawberry slices or blueberries
Corn flakes	Slow-cooked oatmeal
Soda	Mineral water with citrus slices
Candy	Dark chocolate (minimum 70% cacao)
After-dinner sweet	Chewing gum or breath mint
White bread	Whole-grain bread (and half the amount!)
White rice	Quinoa or brown rice
Mid-afternoon junk food	Crunchy raw vegetables
Breakfast sweet roll or muffin	One slice of whole-grain toast topped with scrambled egg
Commercial trail mix	Handful of almonds
Pie	Apple slices with cheese
Pudding	Cottage cheese
Cake	One slice of whole-grain cinnamon-raisin or cranberry toast with butter or low-fat cream cheese





First Month: Living the Low-Sugar Lifestyle

Setting reasonable expectations for what life will be like after you adopt a low-sugar lifestyle is important because you will encounter challenges, and you need to prepare to handle them well. Shopping and cooking is going to change and be more complicated. Friends, family, and loved ones may not understand. They may not accommodate your diet when you hope or expect they will. You may find social events to be overwhelming at first, or you may get confused or frustrated and feel like giving up on the diet. You can overcome these trials and emerge stronger for them.

Shopping and cooking

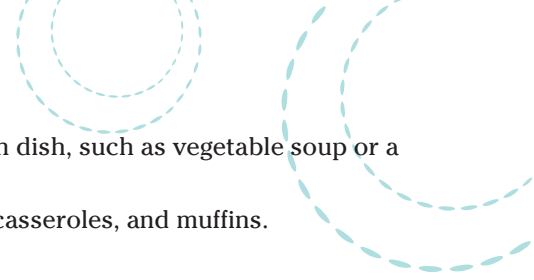
Planning your meals in advance is a vital part of eating well and avoiding reactive eating. An integral part of executing your plan is maintaining your grocery list. Without the right supplies, you'll have a hard time providing quality nutrition for yourself and the rest of your family. On your grocery list, keep a running list of all the items you need for the upcoming meals that you've planned. List some healthy snacks to have on hand, too. Don't forget to include healthy beverages like distilled water, mineral water, and green tea. Double-check the pantry for any ingredients you need for recipes, and be sure that you have enough staples like olive oil and butter on hand for cooking.

When you get to the store, you find most of the natural food that you should load up on, with the exception of nuts, legumes, and oils from the aisles, found on the outer perimeter of the grocery store:

- ✓ Meats
- ✓ Fish
- ✓ Eggs
- ✓ Vegetables
- ✓ Fruits
- ✓ Dairy products

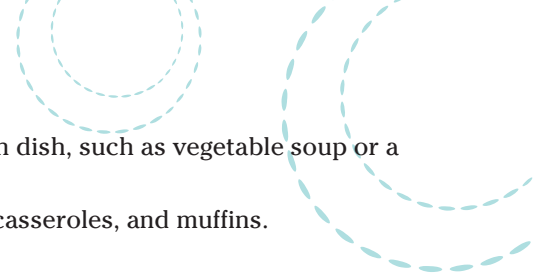
To make vegetables easily available, keep a see-through container of raw, cut vegetables in the refrigerator. For a snack or an appetizer, dip raw, crunchy vegetables in olive oil or organic sour cream. Here are some more tips for working more vegetables into your meal planning:

- ✓ Add steamed chopped vegetables to pasta or rice.
- ✓ Include a salad of mixed greens with your meal at least once per day.

- 
- ✔ Plan some meals around a vegetable main dish, such as vegetable soup or a vegetable stir-fry.
 - ✔ Shred carrots or zucchini into meatloaf, casseroles, and muffins.

Getting out of the house

When you go out to eat at restaurants or special events, don't go hungry. Restaurants are notorious for serving up three times as much food as you need (topped with lots of high-calorie sauces) and for presenting a tantalizing dessert menu to boot. Special events like parties and receptions are often sugar fests, with nothing but junk food and alcohol as far as the eye can see. To help you make sensible choices while you're out, before you head out try eating:

- 
- ✔ a handful of a protein (a few bites of leftover chicken or a handful of almonds)
 - ✔ a high-fiber snack (half an apple, for instance)

Recipes

One of the things that really concerns people when they switch to the low-sugar lifestyle is leaving behind their favorite recipes. Some folks wonder if there's anything they can eat! It's true that you can't eat exactly like you used to, but we do have some recipes for the how to make some great low-sugar versions of your favorite foods.



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Multigrain Pancakes

Prep time: 20 min • Cook time: 8 min • Yield: 8 servings (16–24 pancakes)

Ingredients

1³/₄ cups (210 g) spelt flour
2 cups (240 g) oat flour
2 tablespoons baking powder
1/4 cup (40 g) ground flaxseed meal
1¹/₂ scoops unsweetened whey protein powder (about 2 tablespoons)
1/2 teaspoon salt
3¹/₂ cups (820 mL) low-fat vanilla soy milk
1/4 cup (60 mL) unsweetened applesauce
1¹/₂ tablespoons vanilla extract
1 tablespoon butter
1¹/₂ cups (225 g) blueberries, washed
Dash of cinnamon

Directions

- 1 Whisk the spelt flour, oat flour, baking powder, flaxseed meal, whey protein, and salt together in a large mixing bowl.
- 2 In a separate bowl, stir together the soy milk, applesauce, and vanilla extract.
- 3 Gradually pour the soy milk mixture into the flour mix, continually stirring them together. Stir until the ingredients are just moistened. Set aside for 15 minutes.
- 4 Lightly butter and heat a griddle or large skillet to medium heat.
- 5 Spoon the batter onto the hot griddle or skillet in 3-to 4-inch (8–10 cm) diameter pancakes. Sprinkle blueberries onto the wet batter, and cook until bubbles form (2 to 3 minutes). Flip the pancakes and continue cooking until golden brown on both sides, about 3 minutes more.
- 6 Serve with butter, a sprinkle of cinnamon, and the low-sugar topping of your choice.

Tip: Good low-sugar substitutes for pancake syrup include mango spread or unsweetened applesauce mixed with a drizzle of honey.

Per serving: Calories 254 (From Fat 4.5); Fat 2.5g (Saturated 0.5g); Cholesterol 3.0mg; Sodium 102mg; Carbohydrate 24g (Dietary Fiber 3.5g); Protein 5.0g.



Quinoa and Edamame Salad

Prep time: 10 min • Cook time: 25 min • Yield: 3–4 servings

Ingredients

2 cups (475 mL or 1 pint) vegetable broth
1 cup (190 g) quinoa
2 cups (300 g) (about 10 ounces) frozen shelled edamame, thawed
1 cup (150 g) chopped fresh mushrooms
1 lemon
2 tablespoons chopped fresh tarragon (or 2 teaspoons dried)
2 tablespoons olive oil
Salt and ground black pepper to taste
¼ cup (40 g) chopped walnuts
2 cups (300 g) fresh spinach or bibb (round) lettuce

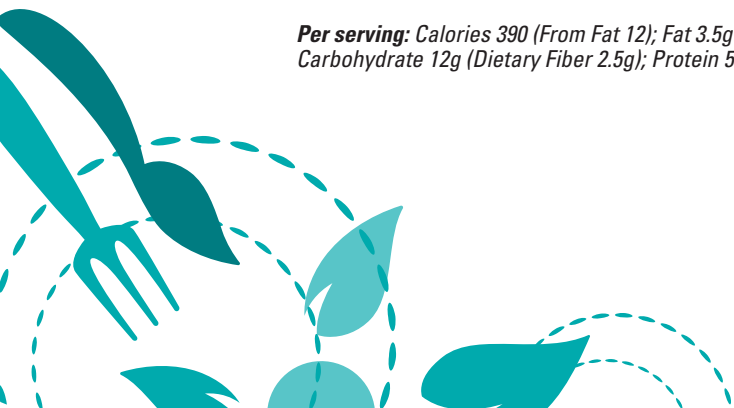
Directions

- 1 Rinse the quinoa in a sieve or fine strainer. Toast the quinoa in a dry skillet over medium heat for 5 to 10 minutes, stirring often. Remove from heat when the quinoa begins to crackle.
- 2 After the quinoa toasts approximately 5 minutes, pour the vegetable broth into a large saucepan or small stockpot and bring it to a boil over high heat.
- 3 Add the quinoa to the boiling broth and return it to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer for about 8 minutes (the quinoa won't be fully cooked).
- 4 Add the edamame and mushrooms. Cover and cook for 8 minutes longer, until the edamame and quinoa are tender.
- 5 Halve the lemon and squeeze juice from one half (about 2 tablespoons) into a small bowl. Add the tarragon, olive oil, salt, and pepper, and whisk together.
- 6 Pour the lemon seasoning mix into the quinoa pot and add the walnuts. Mix thoroughly with a fork.
- 7 Plate each salad with a bed of spinach or lettuce. Scoop the edamame/quinoa mix onto each bed.

Note: This salad is delicious warm or cold.

Vary It! If you're not a fan of edamame, substitute frozen peas or lima beans.

Per serving: Calories 390 (From Fat 12); Fat 3.5g (Saturated 0.5g); Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 44mg; Carbohydrate 12g (Dietary Fiber 2.5g); Protein 5g



Baked Parmesan Chicken

Prep time: 7 min • Cook time: 40–50 min • Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients

4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
½ cup (75 g) panko or Italian bread crumbs
½ cup (45 g) freshly grated Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese
¼ cup (22.5 g) Fresh Italian Seasoning (see the following recipe)
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 large egg

Directions

- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees (175° Celsius). Grease a 9-x-13-inch (23-x-33-cm) baking dish with butter.
- 2 Rinse the chicken breasts under cold tap water and set them aside.
- 3 Mix the bread crumbs, cheese, Fresh Italian Seasoning, salt, and pepper in a shallow dish.
- 4 Beat the egg in a separate shallow dish.
- 5 Dip each chicken breast in the egg, and then press it into the seasoned crumb mix, coating both sides heavily. Place in the baking dish.
- 6 Bake chicken breasts uncovered for 40 to 50 minutes, until internal temperature reads 165 degrees (74° Celsius) with a meat thermometer.

Fresh Italian Seasoning

Ingredients

2 tablespoons minced fresh basil
1 tablespoon minced fresh oregano
2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley
1 dime-sized (5p-sized) garlic clove, minced

Directions

- 1 Mix all ingredients together in a small bowl.

Tip: Because the bake time on this dish is almost an hour, it may work better as a weekend dinner when you're not rushed for time.

Tip: This dish goes well with baked potatoes or roasted red potatoes. It's also excellent with a strong-flavored green like kale or turnip greens.

Per serving: Calories 281 (From Fat 80); Fat 9g (Saturated 3.5g); Cholesterol 150mg; Sodium 482mg; Carbohydrate 6g (Dietary Fiber 1g); Protein 42g.

Turkey Nachos

Prep time: 5 min • **Cook time:** 15 min • **Yield:** 6–8 servings

Ingredients

1/2 pound (230 g) ground turkey
1/2 cup (75 g) chopped onion
1/2 cup (75 g) chopped red pepper
1/2 cup (75 g) chopped green or jalapeño pepper
2 tablespoons taco seasoning mix
1/3 cup (80 mL) water
5 ounces (100 g) blue corn chips
4 ounces (45 g) shredded Mexican cheese blend
1 tomato, diced
1/2 avocado, diced
Sour cream or fresh salsa (optional)

Directions

- 1** Coat a medium skillet with no-stick cooking spray. Combine the turkey, onion, and peppers in the skillet. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until the turkey is browned (about 7 minutes).
- 2** Stir in the taco seasoning and water and simmer 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the water has cooked down.
- 3** Pile the corn chips on a large plate. Top with the turkey and pepper mix. Sprinkle with the cheese.
- 4** Microwave the nachos until the cheese is melted. Top with tomato and avocado and serve warm with sour cream and salsa (if desired).

Per serving: Calories 244 (From Fat 113); Fat 12g (Saturated 5g); Cholesterol 45mg; Sodium 343mg; Carbohydrate 19g (Dietary Fiber 2.5g); Protein 14g.



Broccoli with Creamy Lemon Sauce

Prep time: 10 min • Cook time: 35 min • Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

2/3 cup (160 mL) lowfat cottage cheese

1/4 cup (60 mL) evaporated skim milk

2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

1 teaspoon lemon juice

1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric

White pepper

3 cups (450 g) hot cooked broccoli florets

Directions

- 1** In a blender, combine the cottage cheese, milk, Parmesan cheese, lemon juice, turmeric, and white pepper to taste and purée until the mixture achieves a thin consistency, about 30 seconds.
- 2** Heat the sauce in a skillet, stirring occasionally, until heated through, but do not boil.
- 3** Serve the sauce over the warm broccoli.

Per serving: Calories 45 (From Fat 8); Fat 1g (Saturated 1g); Cholesterol 3mg; Sodium 155mg; Carbohydrate 4g (Dietary Fiber 1g); Protein 6g.



Sugar-Free Brownies

Prep time: 10 min • Cook time: 30 min • Yield: 12 servings

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon butter (to grease pan)
- 1 cup (120 g) whole-wheat flour
- 1/4 cup (30 g) cocoa
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 2/3 cup (160 mL) unsweetened apple juice concentrate
- 1/4 cup (60 mL) canola or vegetable oil
- 1 egg white
- 1/4 cup (40 g) chopped walnuts
- 1 mashed banana

Directions

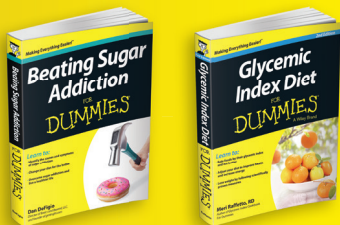
- 1 Preheat the oven to 350 degrees (175° Celcius). Grease the inside of a 9-x-13-inch (23-x-33-cm) baking pan with butter.
- 2 In a large mixing bowl, sift together the flour, cocoa, and baking powder.
- 3 Add the apple juice concentrate, oil, egg, walnuts, and banana. Mix well.
- 4 Spread the batter into the prepared pan. Bake at 350 degrees (175° Celcius) for 30 minutes.
- 5 Remove the brownies from the oven and allow them to cool for a few minutes in the pan before cutting. Serve warm.

Per serving: Calories 139 (From Fat 68); Fat 8g (Saturated 1.5g); Cholesterol 2.5mg; Sodium 18mg; Carbohydrate 17g (Dietary Fiber 2g); Protein 2.5g.



Other Resources

Living Low Sugar Books



Books for Fitness & Healthful Living

Weight Training For Dummies, 4th Edition
Mindful Eating For Dummies
Yoga For Dummies, 3rd Edition
Fitness For Dummies, 4th Edition
Kettlebells For Dummies
Mind-Body Fitness For Dummies
Mindfulness For Dummies
Cross-Training For Dummies
Core Strength For Dummies
Heartburn and Reflux For Dummies
Pilates For Dummies
Exercise Balls For Dummies
Running a Marathon For Dummies

Living Sugar Free Recipes

How to Make Satisfying Sugar-Free Desserts
How to Pack a Low-Sugar Lunch

Living Sugar Free Articles

How to Go Sugar-Free on a Budget
Strategies for Sugar-Free Success
Sugar Addict Type: The Sugar Stalker
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Books for Nutrition and Diet

Belly Fat Diet For Dummies
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Boosting Your Metabolism For Dummies
Plant-Based Diet For Dummies
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Ayurveda For Dummies
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Green Smoothies For Dummies
Gluten-Free Cooking For Dummies, 2nd Ed.
Gluten-Free Baking For Dummies
Living Gluten-Free For Dummies, 2nd Ed.
Pressure Cookers For Dummies, 2nd Ed.
Living Wheat-Free For Dummies
Mediterranean Diet Cookbook For Dummies
Mediterranean Diet For Dummies
Plant-Based Diet For Dummies
Cooking with Spices For Dummies
Celiac Disease For Dummies
Diabetes Meal Planning and Nutrition For Dummies
Macrobiotic For Dummies
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