KICK YOUR CRAVINGS

A step-by-step plan to banish sugar cravings forever

KICK YOUR *Cravings*

If you feel like you are addicted to sugar - you aren't alone. PCOS causes our hormones like insulin to be out of whack, and this can lead to significant sugar cravings. Eating sugar makes us feel good because it triggers the release of a brain chemical called dopamine, which gives it an addictive quality. It is well documented that the cravings and withdrawal symptoms of sugar addicts stimulate similar parts of the brain as heroin and cocaine users!

If you feel like you are being controlled by your cravings, I want you to know it's not because of your lack of willpower. It's because of your hormones. Once we get your insulin functioning more efficiently and address the root cause of your PCOS throughout the PCOS Repair Protocol, these cravings will go away. In the meantime, I've put together a list of my six top steps to deal with cravings now.

Step 1

FOCUS ON FILLING, SATIATING MAIN MEALS

Instead of thinking about what you are going to cut out, put your focus on your main meals. Before cutting out sugar, begin by following the PCOS Repair Breakfast principles in chapter 5 and lunch and dinner Plate Method in chapter 13. These principles will help you to create meals that are rich in protein and healthy fats, with a moderate amount of slow-release carbohydrates.

By eating this way, you will keep your blood sugar stable throughout the day and avoid roller coaster fluctuations in blood sugar and insulin. Eating a meal that is low in protein and higher in simple carbohydrates (like white bread or pasta) causes your blood sugar to rise quickly, triggering the release of insulin to bring it back down.

In PCOS, this often works too efficiently and causes your blood sugar to dip too low. Low blood sugar triggers your body to crave sugar because this is the fastest way to top your blood sugar back up to a healthy level. This is why we don't crave a piece of salmon or boiled egg when we haven't been eating well! By avoiding these roller coaster fluctuations in your blood sugar levels, you will be able to minimize physical sugar cravings. In step three we'll explore other triggers for cravings like emotions and habit.

Once you start eating this way, you should notice a change in your sugar cravings within days. If you don't, try upping the healthy fat in your breakfast. For example, add some nut butter, avocado or coconut milk. Make sure you are hitting the 30-40 grams of protein target in your breakfast as this is one of the best ways to reduce sugar cravings for the rest of the day.

Step 2

SLOWLY REMOVE PROCESSED SUGAR FROM YOUR DIET

Once you feel confident eating your main meals following the principles in the PCOS Repair Protocol, get curious about where you are adding extra sugar in your day. For example in your morning coffee or tea, in desserts or snack foods, soda/other drinks or in premade sauces. ‘Sugar’ includes natural sweeteners such as dates, dried fruit, maple syrup, brown rice syrup, agave, jaggery and coconut sugar. Whilst less processed than white table sugar, these sweeteners still cause a similar effect to your blood sugar and as best avoided whilst we reset your insulin and other hormones.

Start to remove these sources of sugar and replace them with some of the alternatives covered at the end of this resource. Whenever you remove something from your diet, it’s really important to replace it with something that gives you a similar satisfaction. When we fully restrict particular foods or tastes it almost always results in a binge on this ‘forbidden’ food. Choose healthy alternatives so that you don’t feel deprived and you will be much more likely to succeed long term.

Step 3

NOTICE YOUR CRAVING PATTERNS AND TRIGGERS THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Without judgement, be curious about when you are experiencing sugar cravings throughout the day. If it helps, you can record these privately in your journal or the notes section of your phone.

Notice when cravings are striking and try to identify their triggers:

- Is it mid-afternoon when your energy starts to slump?
- Is it when you have a team meeting and there are biscuits or cakes supplied?
- Is it when you get home from work ravenous and can't even think about making dinner before you eat something?
- Is it after dinner even though you are full?
- Is it when you feel emotional or stressed?

Be curious and non-judgemental about triggers. Ask yourself whether your cravings are physical or emotional:

- Examples of physical cravings: habits, low blood sugar (too hungry, didn't eat a sustaining meal), feeling tired
- Examples of emotional cravings: stress eating, eating when you are sad, bored or lonely. One of my favourite questions for clients who reach for sugar when they are emotional is "where is the sweetness missing in your life?"
- Journaling through these questions can be extremely helpful to get to the root cause of your triggers

Step 4

MAKE AN ACTION PLAN

Now that you have identified your triggers and key times that you experience cravings, create an action plan to help you get through these. For example, if it is when your energy slumps in the afternoon, what healthy snacks can you have on hand to reach for instead? Could you leave some almonds, a homemade protein ball or a piece of dark chocolate in your desk drawer?

If you notice your cravings are happening when you are emotional, ask yourself what other self-care practices you could try before reaching for food to comfort yourself. Could you call a friend, take a bath, do a guided meditation or journal your thoughts? Even if you do eventually give in to the craving as a form of comfort, knowing you have worked your way through other self care strategies will help you transition to choosing these habits more consistently over time.

Step 5

WHEN CRAVINGS STRIKE, TRY THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Drink a large glass of water (add some lemon, mint, berries or other natural flavour if this makes it more exciting) – often thirst can be mistaken for food cravings
2. Ask yourself: am I truly hungry or wanting sugar for other reasons? Does your stomach feel hungry? When was the last time you ate?
    a. If you are truly hungry – please by all means: go and have a snack or meal! Choose a balanced meal support blood sugar levels - remember to follow the principles in chapter 5 and 13 of the PCOS Repair Protocol
    b. If you aren't truly hungry, read on:
3. Try breaking your thought pattern: get up from your desk and take a stretch, go for a walk around the block, splash your face or take some deep breaths and see if this helps you interrupt your cravings long enough for you to explore them rather than engaging in them
4. Eat a spoonful of nut butter (e.g. almond, coconut or peanut butter) – these nut butters are subtly sweet so will often hit the sweet spot you are craving, but also provide your body with a healthy fat and protein source that won't spike your blood sugar

Check out this handy graphic I made to help you keep these principles in mind:



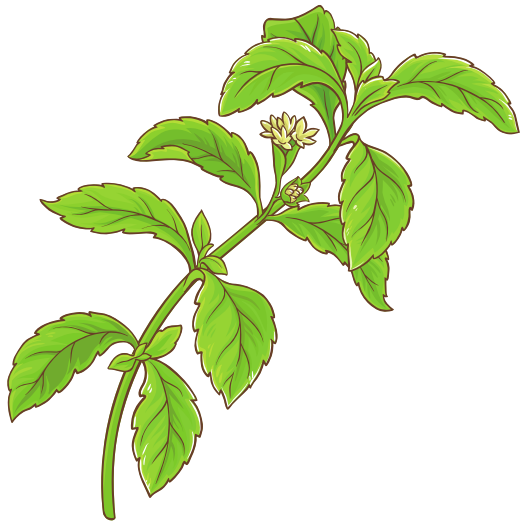
Step 6

BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF WHEN YOU DO GIVE IN TO CRAVINGS:

Addressing addictive behaviours and habits is tough work and will often take weeks or months until you feel under control. Don't be hard on yourself if you can't resist the craving. Learn to pick yourself back up afterwards and keep focusing on your health goals. One high sugar meal, day or even week is not going to destroy your health. What matters is what you do in the long term and how you respond emotionally to straying from your goals. Sometimes the emotional 'beating up' of ourselves for making poor food choices can be more detrimental to our health than the poor food choice itself! Keep this in mind and be forgiving of yourself when you slip up – the goal is not perfection but sustainable change.

If you find that making one poor food choice can cause you to 'throw in the towel' remember this: you don't have to wait until tomorrow or next Monday to get back to following your healthy eating principles. The next time you eat is another opportunity to make a nourishing choice for your body and your hormones. Put this behind you and focus on the positive choice you are making next.

PCOS-FRIENDLY SWEETENERS

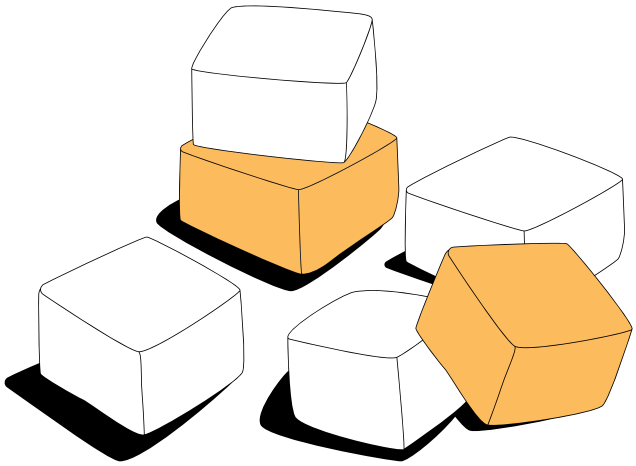


If you find you really need something sweet, you can try natural, blood sugar friendly sweeteners to make your favorite sweet treats. The sweeteners below won't affect your blood sugar or insulin and are okay for everyday use while you adjust to the sugar free lifestyle.

- Monkfruit
- Stevia
- Thaumatin
- Allulose*
- Erythritol*
- Xylitol*

**these sweeteners are sugar alcohols and can cause digestive discomfort when eaten in excess so go easy on them!*

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS TO AVOID



I suggest avoiding artificial sweeteners like those listed below. While these don't directly cause your blood sugar to rise and are calorie-free, emerging research suggests that artificial sweeteners alter our gut bacteria and can contribute to weight gain and insulin resistance. Having an artificial sweetener every now and again is unlikely to be detrimental, but for everyday sweeteners, stick with those in the list above as we know these are safe.

- Acesulfame Potassium - e.g. Sunnett, SweetOne
- Aspartame - e.g. NutraSweet, Equal
- Neotame
- Saccharin - e.g. Sweet'N Low, Sweet Twin, Sugar Twin
- Sucralose - e.g. Splenda

BLOOD SUGAR FRIENDLY SWEET FIXES



- High quality dark chocolate - 70% or higher. Try 85% or 90% if you are brave! The higher the cacao percentage, the lower the sugar content
- Nut butters: almond butter, cashew butter, coconut butter, peanut butter
- Fruit slices with nut butter or a handful of nuts (I love apple slices with almond butter)
- Sweet-tasting herbal teas (go for anything with liquorice or fennel) – add coconut milk for extra creaminess and sweetness
- Homemade fruit 'ice cream': blend frozen fruits together with a splash of coconut or almond milk e.g. frozen banana, berries, mango
- Roasted root vegetables with a sprinkle of cinnamon e.g. sweet potato, carrots, pumpkin
- Homemade 'chocolate sauce': mix a spoonful of nut butter or tahini with a dash of coconut or almond milk, 1 tsp of cacao powder and a few drops of liquid stevia (I love to use a caramel flavored stevia) → you want a runny consistency here and can serve as is or drizzled over fruit or homemade ice cream
- Unsweetened coconut yoghurt with berries
- Protein balls made with nut butter, almond meal and a flavored protein powder (sweetened with stevia or monkfruit)