

Are You Sugar Sensitive?

- *Anisa Abeytia*

HERE IS A SAYING THAT SUGAR FOLLOWED THE QUR'AN and rightfully so. Muslims have a sweet tooth and were the first to engage in the international trade of sugar. This passion for sweets was passed on to Europe. It was this passion for sweets that helped fuel the colonization of the New World in order to establish sugarcane plantations. [1] Even today, sugar remains a sweet indulgence. According to the USDA, the average American consumes 20 teaspoons of sugar a day and 200 pounds a year. [2]

Sugar, as we know it, was not mentioned in the Qur'an or *hadith* (sayings of Muhammad) because sugarcane was unknown. We do know that the Prophet (pbuh) did love sweet things as demonstrated in this *hadith* narrated by A'isha, "The Prophet used to like sweet edible things and honey." [3] The Prophet (pbuh) did have a sweet tooth, but he did not over indulge. Allah did not set specific limits on the consumption of food, but He did provide us with general rules of thumb.

Allah *Subhana Wa Ta'ala* tells us: "*Believers, do not prohibit the wholesome things God has made legitimate for you; but do not go to excess, for God does not love the excessive.* (Qur'an 5:87)

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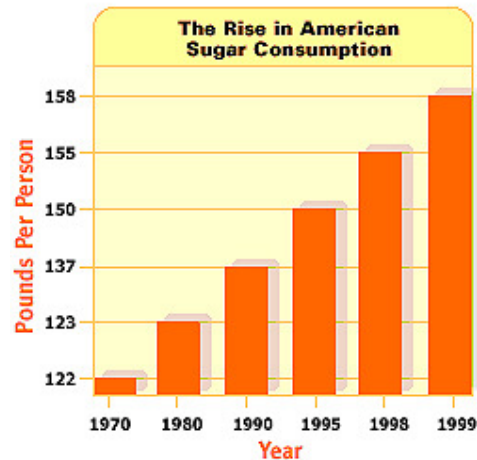
The USDA recommends no more than 10 teaspoons of sugar a day in a 2,000 calorie diet, yet we over consume this by two teaspoons. What is the disconnect and how is this recommended limit so easily surpassed? Some people, due to their biochemistry, are wired to crave sugar and become addicted. These people are sugar sensitive and seek out sugar. [4]

If you recall in part one of this series, sugar creates a false hunger that motivates us to crave more sugar. If we eat sweets made with healthy fats in moderation, the problem of excess weight gain would not be an issue. "We eat, but we're never satisfied. We're full, but we aren't contented." [5] Sugar helps create this problem, but what do I mean when I say sugar?

When one thinks of sugar, the image of a sweet, white powder comes to mind, but to our bodies, anything that breaks down as glucose is recognized as sugar. This could mean white sugar, raw sugar, honey, bread, rice, maple syrup or agave nectar. Not all glucose is depleting to our bodies, after all glucose is our brain's preferred fuel. What is important to keep in mind is the way foods are combined and when they are consumed that provides the body with a steady flow of glucose. What is depleting to our bodies and causes a sugar rush and then a crash is white trash (white sugar, white rice and white bread). We want to avoid this crash and burn approach to eating because it causes a crisis in our bodies. This may seem provocative to some since bread and rice are staples in many cultures. However, it was not white, refined bread and rice that nourished many civilizations, it was their brown cousins.

When white rice was introduced to Asians, they rapidly experienced nutritional deficiencies. The deficiency was so pronounced that “beri beri” was the name given to the cluster of symptoms that include damage to the nervous system, heart and other muscles. [6] The American Medical Association released this shocking statement: “The consumption of sugar and of other relatively pure carbohydrates (refined, bread and rice) has become so great during recent years that it presents a serious obstacle to the improved nutrition of the general public.” This comment fell on deaf ears in 1942! [7]

In addition to contributing to poor nutrition, sugar affects every organ in our body and is the cause of inflammation, which is linked to almost every degenerative disease. Sugar feeds cancer cells on sugar. One teaspoon of sugar can lower the immune system for up to an hour and the average can of soda contains 10 teaspoons of sugar⁹. The tests carried out by Robert McCarrison on rats are very telling. The rats were fed a “typical British diet” of white bread, margarine, sweetened tea, tinned meat and boiled vegetables. Barbra Giggs summed up the findings this way, “Stunted and nervous, with lackluster coats, they snapped at the attendant and took to cannibalism after three days; after they’d killed and eaten three of their number, they were segregated, to die of pneumonia and a variety of gastro-intestinal disorders...” [8] In 1816, the French physiologist F. Magendie conducted a study on dogs. He fed them only sugar and olive oil, they died faster than if they only drank water. [9] Sugar is an anti-nutrient and pulls vitamins and minerals from our bodies and requires our bodies to need vitamins and minerals in much higher quantities. Sugar particularly causes a higher need of the B vitamins, which are already chronically deficient in our diets.



SOURCE: PEACE CEREAL

White sugar is not the only problem. Over-processing and over consumption of simple carbohydrates leads to a break down of the human body and soul. Why is white trash so depleting and pleasing to our taste buds? Kathleen DesMaison’s work in the field of addiction and sugar sensitivity provides a window into the mind and soul-altering effects of sugar and why sugar is so irresistible.

DesMaisons explains in her book *Potatoes not Prozac* that some people are sugar sensitive, meaning that their bodies react differently to simple carbohydrates or white trash. She provides this simple test to determine if one is sugar sensitive. Imagine that you just ate dinner and are full. Imagine that in the kitchen someone has just baked a fresh, hot pan of brownies. As you pass by, do you eat them or leave them until later? If you ate one, chances are you are sugar sensitive.

What causes this drive to eat the brownies is low serotonin, a hormone, and low beta-endorphins, a neurotransmitter. This is a bit of biochemistry, but to make a long story short, it can cause a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde syndrome where one day you are confident and happy and the next you are unsure and depressed. Sugar acts as a replacement for these two substances that the brain needs. The problem is that sugar only makes matters worse. And it’s not just sugar sensitive



people that are affected adversely, children are particularly susceptible. Our food choices are affecting the natural ebb and flow of hormones and neurotransmitters and making us crazy. "Sugar sensitive people have a greater reaction to all things that evoke a beta-endorphin response..." which can lead to compulsive behavior. [10]

Another important thing about serotonin is that it "...also increases impulse control, which allows you to more easily 'just say no'. People with low serotonin do not have good impulse control." [11] An example of how this works out in daily life is the person who sees a food ad and has to have what is in the ad *right now*. This person may be viewed as a real go-getter, but without planning and foresight, this is just impulsive behavior driven by low beta-endorphins.

In conclusion, remember that simple carbohydrates are not "bad." It is the way they are processed that makes them depleting. Work gradually and thoughtfully and do not try to change over night. Remember Allah loves small things done consistently. I invite you to keep a food journal and record daily what you ate and how it made you feel (please visit www.womenshealingcircle.org for a sample food journal).

I would also like to invite each of you to leave a note on my website so we can begin a dialogue about our healing journey. I look forward to sharing with you.

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References

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- [10] *Americans Drowning in Sugar*, Center For Science In The Public Interest
- [11] See <http://www.cspinet.org/new/sugar.html>. August 3, 1999