

# Sugar a hindrance to body, mind

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Since I was little, I've heard people say, "You are what you eat." If that were the case, I'd be as sweet as a lollipop. But I'm not, and what gets the blame for that? Sugar.

It has never done anything for me but make me fat and cranky. I honestly think sugar has wreaked a lot of havoc in my life. The white powder makes me hyper for about an hour and then I crash and burn. After the "high" it makes me tired, so I don't have energy to exercise, which also exacerbates my weight issue.

Sugar makes my brain feel cloudy, and I find it hard to concentrate on school work. If I didn't eat so much sugar I would understand my class readings the first time I read them, not the second or third time through.

It makes me a danger on the road. Once on a road trip I ate ice cream before starting on a long, four-hour leg of the trip. Not a half hour after my first bite I was sleepy and felt shaky and I couldn't pull over. I had to get home that night to get to work the next morning. So I struggled to keep my eyes open, wishing I hadn't eaten the ice cream, no matter how good it tasted going down.

Gary Taubs, a well-respected science journalist, has written a book titled "Why We Get Fat." His argument, after more than a decade of research, is we eat too many simple carbohydrates — sugar, processed foods made with refined white flour, etc. These foods have no nutritional value so we eat more and more of them to fill up — and they usually taste pretty good — so we get fat, but also cranky, "high," tired and depressed, to name just a few wonderful side effects.

I feel as if I'm addicted to the stuff. People who don't have a "sweet tooth" laugh and think it's all in my head. It might very well be. Sugar affects our brain chemistry, and if you eat enough of it and gain weight, it can lead to type-2 diabetes. That's what happened to my dad, and diabetes medication isn't cheap. If diabetes goes uncontrolled it can lead to kidney failure, blindness, neuropathy in the hands and feet and eventually death. Sugar is terrible — but it's so hard to stop eating it.

I come from a long line of "sugar addicts." My dad got his chocolate addiction from his dad and he passed it along to me and my siblings. We all love sweet junk food and we're predisposed to be sensitive to sugar. My mom has type-1 diabetes, which means she was born with it, and she has trouble avoiding sweets, even though spikes in her insulin levels can lead to a coma, not just the occasional moody outburst for the normal person.

So, it's literally in my genes to want sugar, which is why I am trying really hard to stop eating it cold-turkey. I slip up now and then, because sugary, processed foods are quick to find and eat (and have I mentioned they taste really good?) I'm starting slowly — no candy, cookies or ice cream — the foods I know are plain sugar for the first month, then I'll slowly ease off white flour. I'm hoping it helps me lose weight as well as feel better mentally.

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