Tips on How Diabetics Can Curb Their Sugar Cravings

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Diabetes Sugar Cravings: Keeping Your Glucose Levels in Check

I know from personal experience that as a diabetic, curbing sugar cravings can be one of the hardest things to do when your whole body is begging for a sweet treat.

Temptation seems to be everywhere — brightly-colored candy bars at the grocery store, mouth-watering wafts from freshly baked goods from stores or worse, from your friend's kitchen where it feels like turning down a slice of a home-made cake is a snub to your friend.

Fluctuating hormones can make this especially difficult for women. So many women report sugar and/or carb cravings at key points in their cycle that it can't be a myth that chocolate soothes PMT.

So what can you do when your body is screaming for sugar but your brain knows that giving in to the cravings mean rollercoastering blood glucose levels?

Well here's a brutal reminder of what prolonged failure to manage your diabetes and the resulting regular high blood sugar levels can do to you.

Worst-case scenarios: Blindness, amputations, heart problems, stroke. Other complications include digestive problems, nerve damage, and foot ulcers. Still, want that cupcake with marshmallow frosting?

It's time to find new sweet treats that won't send your blood glucose readings sky high.

Sugar Alternatives

The first thing you can do is swap sugar for alternatives. Although not terribly healthy choices, sometimes that can of diet soda or a couple of pieces of sugar-free candy can curb the cravings.

Just be careful not to eat or drink these things too regularly as the jury is still out on the long-term use of artificial sweeteners. There's also the danger of too many artificial sweeteners causing an unpleasant laxative effect.

While cooking or baking you could experiment with substituting sugar with some of the newer natural sweeteners like stevia, which is plant-based.

There are many cookbooks, blogs and websites offering adapted recipes claiming to be more suitable for diabetics and you can get some great ideas from them.

However, beware of current trends that suggest substituting processed sugar with honey, high fructose corn syrup or agave syrup. All of these still raise blood sugar levels, and in the case of agave syrup, may elevate triglycerides, trigger metabolic syndrome, and increase the risk of heart disease in diabetics.

Making Changes

It may be just as well to bake as you always have, or buy your favorite “naughty” product but work on making them an occasional treat and make sure you keep a very close eye on portion sizes.

Check the recommended servings in your recipe book — if the calorie count per portion is calculated on you cutting your cake into eight slices, make sure you do cut your cake into 8 slices even if you have to freeze seven for another day.

Can diabetics drink alcohol? It’s OK to have a small glass of wine or beer if that’s what you crave, but remember alcoholic drinks are loaded with hidden sugar so make sure your glass is a reasonable size — not one you can fit half the wine bottle’s contents into!

Healthy Snack Ideas

To keep yourself on the straight and narrow find quick and tasty alternatives to candy and chocolate and make sure you carry portioned snacks with you at all times. The following are great examples of healthy and satisfying snacks:

- Popcorn is great as long as you either pop it yourself and eat it plain (a small amount of butter is allowed) or make sure you don’t choose the toffee- or caramel-encrusted variety from the store.
- Rice cakes are very convenient and travel well. They even do flavored versions and some with a very thin chocolate layer which might help quell your desire for sweets.
- Low-calorie hot chocolate drinks are another good cheat if you simply must have chocolate. Choose versions that require you to add hot water, as milky versions add calories and carbs.
- A small portion of nuts (preferably unsalted) or roasted pumpkin seeds or even some cheese might calm your cravings.
- Graham snacks in pre-portioned packs are handy and tasty too. In fact, any cookies or cakes in portioned wrappings are great to stop you binging on entire packets.
- You could also bake in batches and portion treats yourself. Fill mini snack containers or bags for work or if you are prone to getting hungry when out and about.
- Keep grapes in the freezer for a refreshing sweet snack (don’t let them defrost as they go mushy) and keep your fruit bowl stocked with your favorites. Bananas are great for a long slow release of energy, ideal for diabetics.
- Try making your own healthy dried fruit like dried apples with cinnamon.

Sometimes it’s simply a case of changing your routine slightly. If you tend to snack on sweet treats late at night, have dinner later or eat a bigger meal so the munchies don’t strike.

If you can’t resist sweets when meeting friends at your favorite coffee shop, change where you meet, or suggest a walk instead. If swimming makes you hungry or you find you always need to eat after the gym, make sure you pack low-sugar foods to have to hand so you can avoid the temptation of grabbing potato chips from the machine.

Finally, remember that it’s great to keep a close eye on your sugar intake but bear in mind that low sugar does not always equate to healthy. You must keep a close eye on all your food to ensure maintaining great management of your diabetes.