

## Atkins and Sugar Cravings

Sugar is everywhere you look and it might pop up in some surprising places. Did you know that most whole grain breads have at least one form of sugar in them? We have a national sweet tooth epidemic. Even if you don't eat a lot of sugary treats you may experience intense sugar cravings in the first few weeks of the Atkins diet. So many "healthy" carbohydrate foods have hidden sugars in them, your body may be experiencing withdrawal.

The problem with sugar is that your blood sugar is tied into your energy levels and your overall health. When your blood sugar is too low, you will experience intense cravings. High blood sugar is a result of eating high-sugar meals. When you eat concentrated sugar, your blood sugar will raise to high levels. Your pancreas thinks there is something wrong and then it secretes insulin to lower the blood sugar. As this happens more, you can create pre-diabetic conditions in your body as your pancreas becomes worn out and eventually cannot secrete insulin.

Fortunately, getting started on the Atkins diet plan can put a stop to this cycle. However, this doesn't mean that sugar cravings go away automatically. Sugar products are everywhere and temptation is sometimes hard to fight.

The best way to approach sugar cravings is with planning. If you maintain a balance of protein, fat and fiber in your daily diet you will prevent blood sugar drops that lead to sugar cravings. Also, do not go too long between meals without eating. Snacks are an important part of keeping your blood sugar stable. Have some handy snacks like cheese, nuts, seeds and boiled eggs on hand with you so you can quickly stabilize your blood sugar without turning to sweet treats.

Sugar cravings can also be a sign of a nutritional deficiency. When you are low on magnesium, you will crave chocolate and other sweets. Zinc and chromium can also stave off sugar cravings. If you aren't taking a good multivitamin supplement with these minerals, start immediately. If you are and you are still experiencing cravings, consider trying additional supplements of these nutrients.

Another tactic is to brush your teeth. Many Atkins dieters find that brushing their teeth or using Listerine breath strips can help with cravings. Both methods will numb your mouth and prevent you from wanting to eat. Drinking two large glasses of water can also help eliminate cravings. If your stomach is full, then you'll be less likely to reach for a sugary treat.

Sometimes out of sight, out of mind is the best approach. If you find yourself

overcome with cravings while you are at home, get outside and take a walk. The distraction will have you forgetting your sugar craving in no time. Calling a friend for support or logging into an Atkins support forum can also go a long way toward preventing you from succumbing to sugar cravings.

Having a low-carb version of your favorite treat is another good idea. You are less likely to feel deprived if you can have a satisfying low carb treat. There are a wide variety of low-carb products available on the market that can beat your sweet tooth. Low-carb yogurt, chocolate, ice cream and candy can all help you stay on the Atkins plan and still get something sweet to eat.

Sugar cravings are a reality of following the Atkins plan, but the previous tips will help you overcome them and stay committed to your weight loss efforts.

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