



FIRE FIGHTER  
**nutrition**

Eat for Health.  
Eat for Life.  
Eat for Real.



# SUGAR-FREE CHALLENGE

## SUCCESS GUIDE



# 30 DAYS TO BETTER LIVING

## WELCOME TO YOUR 30-DAY SUGAR-FREE CHALLENGE

Congratulations on taking this important step to help improve your health, boost your energy and quality sleep, and take control over your cravings.

It's time to get excited because eliminating **added sugar** from your diet has an incredibly powerful impact on your health.

You will be amazed at how different you feel just a few weeks from now.

You might even look different, with better sleep, less water retention and a smaller waistline.

This guide contains suggestions about how to get rid of the added sugars and other sweetened foods and drinks from your diet, so you can get the maximum benefit as soon as possible.

You don't have to do this alone. We are here for you every step of the way.

Keep an eye on the [IAFF Nutrition Facebook Group](#) for daily tips and motivation as you make your way through this challenge. Let's do this!







# 30-DAYS SUGAR-FREE 101

*Be sure to check with your physician or healthcare provider before making any major changes in your current diet.*

There are countless reasons to eliminate added sugar from your diet.

- It saps your health.
- Sugar contributes to a growing waistline.
- It leaves you feeling tired, moody and fatigued.
- It fills your body with empty calories that can make you feel like you're riding a blood sugar roller coaster.

And that roller coaster has the potential to end up in calamity, as too much sugar can lead you down the track headed for disease.

There are a few things you should know before you get started.

This challenge is about eliminating **added sugar** from your diet.

**This does not include natural sugars, like those found in whole foods like fruits and vegetables.**



Whole foods contain numerous health-promoting benefits (like fiber, vitamins and minerals) that are really good for you and make valuable additions to your diet.

It's when we start adding extra sugar to our food and drinks that it becomes a problem.

Sugar goes by many names. This makes it super easy for it to hide. (Be sure to check out the chart later in this guide.)

There are a few basic types of sugar you should know about.

**Glucose** – This is the kind of sugar that's in your bloodstream, after your digestive system breaks down your food.

It's the purest form of sugar – and it's what fuels your body with energy. It also occurs naturally in some foods.

**"A healthy outside starts from the inside."**

**– Robert Urich**



**HEALTHY,  
WHOLE,  
NATURAL  
FOOD**





# NATURAL VS. ADDED SUGARS

**Fructose** – This natural form of sugar is commonly found in fruits. However, it has to be processed by your liver to become usable.

For the most part, our livers are designed to handle the amount of naturally occurring fructose that is found in fresh, whole foods.

But eating too much fructose (more on that later) can increase the likelihood your body will store it and lead to a cascade of potential problems.

**Lactose** – This is a naturally occurring sugar that's found in plain (unsweetened) dairy products.

These next two categories of sugars tend to fall into the added sugar category, and they are the main focus of your Sugar-Free Challenge:

**Sucrose** – This is a combination of 50% glucose and 50% fructose. This is table sugar, plus you'll find it in a lot of packaged foods.

**High-Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS)** – This is a manufactured form of sugar that is similar in makeup to table sugar or sucrose, except it contains a little more fructose, at least 55%.



# ADDED SUGARS ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS SUGAR ALCOHOLS



Your body metabolizes fructose differently than glucose, and consuming too much fructose over time has been shown to contribute to health problems, from overloading your liver and weight gain to diabetes, heart disease and some forms of cancer.

Plus, your body gets no nutritional benefit from those empty calories.

## WHAT ABOUT ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS?

During this challenge, we're also going to be eliminating artificial/non-nutritive sweeteners + sugar alcohols.

Studies show these can make your cravings for sweets even worse and some have been linked to potential health issues and digestive upsets.

Common artificial sweeteners – aspartame, saccharin, acesulfame potassium (ace-K) and sucralose.

Common sugar alcohols – sorbitol, maltitol, mannitol, xylitol, erythritol, isomalt and hydrogenated starch hydrolysates.



# YOUR CHALLENGE

Approach this challenge as a mini-experiment to see how you feel after going 30 days without any added sugars in your diet!

**When the challenge is over,  
ASK YOURSELF...**

- Do you like how you feel?
- Do you notice that foods taste different to you now?
- Is this a lifestyle you can sustain?

Depending on how much sugar you normally consume...

In a few days, you may notice a change in your mood, energy, skin, and even the number of aches and pains you have.

Are you ready to get started?



**ENJOY  
THE  
SWEET  
LIFE**





# CHALLENGE STEPS

## STEP 1:

Go through your cabinets, fridge and pantry and get rid of or donate anything that contains added sugar, artificial sweeteners and sugar alcohols.

Be sure to read the labels – including condiments like ketchup or even pasta sauce – and eliminate those as well.

Remember, dairy products naturally contain some sugar, but be on the lookout for added sugar (like the kind found in sweetened/flavored yogurt).

Natural sugars (like those found in unsweetened/plain dairy products) are OK.

## STEP 2:

Now that you've created a clean slate, it's time to make a plan.

This is not a time to rely solely on willpower. Come up with a list of meals or snacks to replace your old items.

For example, if you normally eat something sweet each afternoon as a pick-me-up, what will you have instead? What will you snack on at night, if that's part of your normal routine?

Check out the list of healthy snacks later in this guide for ideas and options.



# CHALLENGE STEPS

## STEP 3:

It's time to go shopping and stock up on your new items!

Nuts, lean protein, healthy fats, fruits, veggies – this is a perfect time to explore and experiment!

## STEP 4:

Be good to yourself.

If you normally drink a lot of soda (regular or diet) or snack on sweets during the day, this could be a major change in how you fuel your body over the course of the day.

Stay hydrated and listen to your body's cues.

If you're tired mid-afternoon, try having a cup of green tea with a dash of cinnamon for an energy boost.

And remember ... the payoff will definitely be worth it!

## STEP 5:

Read and comment on the daily posts inside our [Facebook Community](#) and reach out for support. You can do this!

**Do something  
today that your  
future self will  
thank you for.**





# THE MANY NAMES OF SUGAR

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Here is a list of the aliases that sugar uses on your food labels. Go through your pantry and eliminate items with these ingredients, and avoid them during this challenge. Manufacturers are coming up with new terms, so pay attention.

Agave nectar	Dextrose	Molasses
Barbados sugar	Evaporated cane juice	Muscovado
Barley malt	Free-flowing brown	Palm sugar
Barley malt syrup	sugars	Panocha
Beet sugar	Fructose	Powdered sugar
Brown sugar	Fruit juice	Raw sugar
Buttered syrup	Fruit juice concentrate	Refiner's syrup
Cane juice	Glucose	Rice syrup
Cane juice crystals	Glucose solids	Saccharose
Cane sugar	Golden sugar	Sorghum syrup
Caramel	Golden syrup	Sucrose
Carob syrup	Grape sugar	Sugar (granulated)
Castor sugar	HFCS (high-fructose	Sweet sorghum
Coconut palm sugar	corn syrup)	Syrup
Coconut sugar	Honey	Treacle
Confectioner's sugar	Icing sugar	Turbinado sugar
Corn sweetener	Invert sugar	Yellow sugar
Corn syrup	Malt syrup	
Corn syrup solids	Maltodextrin	
Date sugar	Maltol	
Dehydrated cane juice	Maltose	
Demerara sugar	Mannose	
Dextrin	Maple syrup	





# 10 TIPS FOR ELIMINATING SUGAR



To your brain, sugar is a reward, and if you eat a lot of it, you're simply reinforcing that reward. That can make it challenging to break the sugar habit. Here are some tips to make it easier:

1

## **Go cold turkey.**

Quitting all at once means you will get your tastebuds used to a lower-sugar diet faster. That's good news! But... if that seems overwhelming, you can go for a more moderate approach, cutting back a little bit every day.

## **Stay hydrated.**

This can help you avoid headaches and keep your digestive system on-point. And since we often mistake thirst for hunger, it can help keep food cravings at bay.

2

3

## **Make time to sleep.**

When you don't get enough sleep, your body's hunger hormones can become disrupted, affecting both the mechanisms that make you want to eat and that let you know when you're full. This will set you up for even more cravings.

## **Eat protein.**

It keeps you feeling fuller longer, and can help keep your energy up if you're dragging because you feel low on sugar. Good protein sources include fish, beef, poultry and legumes.

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**Fill up on fiber.**

In addition to keeping your digestive system happy, this also will help you feel full. Bonus: a fiber-rich diet can assist with blood-sugar management. Vegetables and legumes are great sources.

**Activity.**

Intentionally move your body for 20-30 minutes every day to cut stress, boost your energy and improve your sleep.

6

7

**Distract your tastebuds.**

If you are having a craving, try eating a sour pickle, something bitter (or spicy) or other savory food instead. Follow it up with a drink of water.

**Stay busy.**

Now's the time to check some items off your to-do list! Organize a room, read a book, learn something new! Avoid "entertainment eating" (when you eat because you're bored or out of habit).

8



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**Change your routine.**

This allows you to avoid activities you normally associate with eating sweets. For example, if you usually hit the drive-through for an iced coffee (and maybe a treat to go along with it), make your own coffee at home.

**Go to bed earlier when possible.**

If you are having a craving at night and all else fails, make it an early bedtime when you can. Your body could likely use the rest.

10

# FAST & EASY LOW-SUGAR SNACK IDEAS

- Fruit
- Roasted chickpeas
- Hard-boiled eggs
- Plain yogurt with nuts & berries
- Raw nuts (almonds, walnuts, pecans, etc.)
- Veggies & hummus
- Sliced apples with almond or peanut butter
- Jerky made with organic, grass-fed meat (check label for added sugar)
- Pepitas (pumpkin seeds)
- Cooked rolled oats with peanut butter
- Tuna salad in lettuce cups
- Chia seed pudding
- Edamame
- No-sugar-added trail mix
- Celery sticks with peanut butter
- Sunflower seeds
- Turkey roll-up with sliced bell pepper
- Popcorn (always check the label)
- Dates
- Low-sugar trail mix or granola
- A smoothie
- Veggies with guacamole








# EAT FOR HEALTH. EAT FOR LIFE. EAT FOR REAL.

In an effort to reduce these preventable deaths and diseases, the International Association of Fire Fighters developed a campaign to bring awareness to the importance of nutrition and its role in fire fighter health. This campaign includes challenges like this and others to engage our members in creating and maintaining healthy eating habits that support fire fighter training, work demands, fitness goals and long-term health.

If you would like more information and resources on fire fighter nutrition, please visit our website at [www.iaff.org/nutrition](http://www.iaff.org/nutrition). You can also join the [IAFF Nutrition Facebook group here](#).



**FIRE FIGHTER  
nutrition**

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Eat for Life.  
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**REAL LIFE NUTRITION**  
with Lisa Decker, MS

*The information contained in this guide is for general education purposes only and is not intended to treat, cure or prevent any disease or medical conditions. Check with your health practitioner before making diet and lifestyle changes.*