

Author, TV host and health coach SARAH WILSON quit sugar and changed her life. Here she tells how you can too

...be upfront. There are a few harsh-ish realities to bear in mind before you set out to quit a sugar habit. Quitting, I found, took about two months. Studies say it takes between 21 and 66 days to change a habit, from a psychological perspective. My experience and research found it took most people the same amount of time to overcome the physical habit of eating sugar, too. I advise pacing yourself. It properly over eight weeks. When you first quit sugar, you must quit everything. Including fruit, fruit juice, agave and honey. Some nutritionists advise just cutting out the added sugar. But a lot of the sugar experts agree: it's best to get rid of all sugar at first, so you can break the addiction and then recalibrate. At the end of the 12-week program, some fruit and safe sugar alternatives can be reintroduced. There is a detox period where you will feel like crap. This lasted only a week or so for me. For some it can last six weeks. But that, it's a non-issue. I promise.

Will not be convinced?
JUST CONSIDER THIS
We're eating more low-fat food than ever. We're joining more gyms. But we're putting on more weight.
THEN CONSIDER THIS
Today we eat more than a kilo of sugar a week. Just 150 years ago we ate next to none. Low-fat food often contains more sugar than the wholefood version. The low-fat industry is big business.

Operation eat fat
I'm suggesting you eat fat. I know it's unconventional, but it works. Humans aren't designed to restrict their intake of food. When we fast, our bodies are programmed to think we're in famine or in a state of emergency, and thus particular hormones and urges kick in to ensure our survival. When our bodies are deprived of food, our survival instinct kicks in and we become obsessed with seeking out food. Our systems are any calories ingested for safe-keeping. And that's why extreme diets don't work. Usually, they're counter-effective. More than 90 per cent see you put on weight. Which is why I found this interim phase so important when quitting sugar. We have to replace what we're taking out, for both psychological reasons (so we don't get depressed and frustrated) and for physiological reasons (our bodies don't go into famine mode).



Should YOU be quitting?

- Do you get an energy slump in the afternoon?
- Do you need something sweet after meals?
- Does your stomach get bloated after eating?
- Are you unable to eat just one piece of cake and walk away?
- Are you 'podgy' around the middle, perhaps even slim everywhere else?
- Do you often feel unclear? That you're not always sharp and on-form?

I ticked "yes" to most of the above and had a sneaking suspicion that sugar might be the thing making me feel baseline-crappy. If you do too, then have a go and see if quitting works.

I QUIT SUGAR and you can too!



Sugar-free nut-ella

- 1 cup hazelnuts
- 125ml coconut milk
- 80ml rice malt syrup
- 1 tablespoon macadamia oil or coconut oil
- ¼ cup raw cacao powder
- 1 tablespoon vanilla powder

Preheat oven to 180°C. Bake the hazelnuts on a tray for 8-10 minutes until browned. Rub off most of the skins. Grind the nuts in a food processor until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients and process until well mixed. Add extra coconut milk if you want more of a "sauce" consistency. Store in the fridge for several weeks.

Eat fat and protein
Once we take out sugar, the best thing you can do is replace it with fat and some protein... wholesome, unprocessed fats and quality protein, like eggs, cheese, nuts and coconuts.

THE REASON IS TWO-FOLD
♦ It takes care of the craving for a "treat" – which is part of the sugar addiction. When I replaced my afternoon chocolate treat with a fatty, protein-rich food, I didn't feel I was denying myself – emotionally or physically.
♦ Fat and protein fill us up. They curb the cravings.



Fat vs Sugar – the science

1 FAT DOESN'T MAKE YOU FAT (SUGAR DOES).
We grew up being told fat was bad – it led to heart attacks and cholesterol issues. Problem was, the science was wrong. Nutritionists have just realised this to be the case and are starting to reassess guidelines. They're realising the reason they were after – the common culprit – was sugar.

2 FAT FILLS US UP – SO WE CAN'T GORGE ON IT.
Fats, proteins and carbs have appetite hormones that act as messengers to the brain to control our appetite. So [if our systems are in balance] we don't get fat from eating fat and protein. Our bodies ensure this. We get full.

3 BUT, WE GORGE ON SUGAR. IN FACT, WE'RE DESIGNED TO.

When we eat fructose, our body doesn't notice it in our system. It goes undetected. And so we can eat and eat and eat it, but our bodies don't feel full. Which is why you can drink a jumbo-sized juice. Can you imagine drinking that much yoghurt? It would be pretty much impossible. Plus, we're programmed to actively seek out and binge on sugar. Way back when it was very rare, we had to stock up when we could.

4 SUGAR TURNS DIRECTLY TO FAT.

The way fructose is converted to energy in our bodies means that it side-steps the fat-creation control mechanism in the liver and is converted directly to fatty acids, and then body fat.

Almond butter bark

MAKES 12-15 SHARDS

- ½ cup coconut oil, melted
- ¼ cup almond spread, slightly warmed or melted
- 2 tablespoons coconut flakes
- 2 tablespoons rice malt syrup
- Pinch of rock salt, ground
- Handful cacao nibs or dark chocolate (85% cacao) shavings

Line a baking tray with baking paper. Combine the oil, almond spread, coconut flakes and syrup in a bowl. Spread on the tray and sprinkle with salt and cacao nibs. Freeze for about 20 minutes, then snap into shards. Store in an airtight container in the fridge (the shards will melt if left out at room temperature).

