



Taming a Sweet Tooth

Bowls of Halloween candy are already out. It's scary. If I started eating that stuff now, I'd have a steady habit going long before any trick-or-treaters ring my doorbell.

Sugar is a problem, especially this time of year when it starts showing up everywhere. For many of us, the more sugar we eat, the more we want. If you have a sweet tooth, like I do, there are a variety of ways to tame it. What works best for me is to have one or two squares of dark chocolate most days, and a dessert on occasion but not regularly.

I've experimented with a variety of ways to limit sugar. I started by allowing myself one fudgesicle or peppermint patty each day. While they are both good lowfat choices, it didn't work because they were high in sugar. One was never enough; I always wanted more. It kept me craving sweets, so I'd start having just a little of this, a little of that, until those "little bits" were really adding up.

Next I tried allowing myself one dessert a week. That was better, but I spent way too much time thinking about what it would be and it was hard to stick to just one.

What I like about the dark chocolate is that it satisfies my sweet tooth and yet the sugar content is low enough that I don't crave more. An added benefit is that dark chocolate contains antioxidants, so there is some nutritional value. Sugar has no nutritional value other than calories.

Even with a good plan that works most of the time, I can still get off track. While I usually recover quickly from vacations, this year I overdid it and was back to craving sweets.

The best way I know of to stop craving sugar is to stop eating it: three days is usually enough. The first time I ever did this, I thought those three days lasted forever. All I could think about was sugar. I drank herb teas that were naturally sweet without sugar and ate extra fruit. By the third day, just like magic, I stopped wanting it.

Since then I've gone off sugar many times and it has gotten progressively easier. This fall I went off the stuff for 5 days just to be sure. I share my story because sweets are so challenging and we are headed into the season of endless sugar.

If you have a sweet tooth, what is your plan for dealing with Halloween candy, Thanksgiving pies and Christmas cookies? If your plan is to stuff yourself until January and then go on a diet, you are setting yourself up for a stressful and cranky holiday season.

It's better to have a plan, make conscious choices and find a realistic approach that works for you. Tame that inner sugar monster!



How Safe are Calcium Supplements?

A recent study concluded that calcium supplements increase the risk of heart attack, possibly by as much as 30%! This is important news: high levels of calcium are frequently recommended to prevent osteoporosis and the risk of bone fracture. This news could dramatically change our use of calcium.

It appears that calcium from food doesn't have the same risk. It is possible that the high doses of calcium found in supplements is more than our body can effectively utilize. We know that in renal disease, high levels of calcium in the blood can cause calcification of soft tissue: a bone-like matrix develops around the heart and blood vessels. A constant barrage of too-much calcium may well have a similar effect on all of us.

The study didn't differentiate the form of calcium supplement and it didn't look at supplements given with vitamin D—so both of these factors could make a difference. It also didn't indicate if foods fortified with calcium are like taking supplements or like getting it from food. Soy milk, almond milk, orange juice and many other foods can have calcium added.

More research is sure to follow. Until we know more, I think it makes sense to use some caution with calcium supplements. The typical calcium recommendations are 1000—1200mg for adults. Get as much as you can from food. If you don't tolerate milk, you may tolerate yogurt and cottage cheese. Leafy greens and fish with bones are also good sources. Phosphorus, found in meats and soda, binds calcium in the gut, so limiting these will improve the absorption of the calcium that you get.

If you feel like you still need to supplement, consider taking multiple small doses of calcium citrate (the best absorbed form) with vitamin D. Take no more than 500 mg at a time, and smaller doses might even be better.

Recipe for the Month

[Roasted Tomato Sauce](#)

[Tomato and White Bean Stew](#)

Click the links to the recipe, or find it on my blog at www.HealthyHabitsCoach.wordpress.com.



What is your holiday eating strategy? Making "perfect" food choices is not reasonable over the holidays, and yet it helps to have some level of control. I can help you develop a strategy that works for you and allows you to fully enjoy the holidays. kathy@healthyhabitscoach.com or 707 431-7524

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

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