

### Part 4, Chapter 43: Processed Sugar

Oh no. Not sugar too ... but ...

Processed sugar, the white stuff that comes in a bag and looks a lot like a crystallized drug is ... well, basically is a crystallized drug. It is **VERY** different than the sugar in fresh fruits and vegetables, which have all the accompanying enzymes to properly digest said fruits and vegetables in a timely manner! Processed sugar is, essentially, a drug.

Sugar comes from two primary sources: Sugar cane and sugar beets. The sugar juice is extracted, boiled down and turned into a crystallized granule in the process. Of eating sugar cane and sugar beets, both are fine. Beets are, of course, delicious and sugar cane is ... okay. (I wasn't especially impressed when I tried it.)

Under soft drinks, previously discussed, I already got into much of what's problematic with processed sugar. The bottom line is that it is a processed product and lacks the associated fiber and enzymes that facilitate its digestion. In effect, it's an extremely concentrated food that essentially acts like a drug.

Imagine a drug that can intoxicate us, can infuse us with energy and can be taken by mouth. It doesn't have to be injected, smoked, or snorted for us to experience its sublime and soothing effects. Imagine that it mixes well with virtually every food and particularly liquids, and that when given to infants it provokes a feeling of pleasure so profound and intense that its pursuit becomes a driving force throughout their lives.<sup>{1}</sup>

Imagine no more, and "Dixie Crystal" is its name. And it is addictive. **Very addictive.** If I asked, which would you rather have: A crisp juicy apple or a Snicker's candy bar, I think the answer to that would be self-evident. That one would choose the apple instead is more a matter of volition and education.

It used to be that Emmale would buy me a Three Musketeers and I would buy her a Snickers when shopping ... as a 'treat'. She would place it on my desk. It didn't take very long before I'd rip open the double sized bar, one for now, one for later. Later came quickly. Both of us now know better than to buy these any more. (The treat de jour is now roasted pistachios.) Still, there's good reason why candy bars are displayed by cash registers: Because they sell.

Here and Now ask a relevant question: "Is Sugar More Addictive Than Cocaine?"<sup>{2}</sup>

James DiNicolantonio, a cardiovascular research scientist, ... recently published a comprehensive review of dozens of studies in which he contends that sugar is more dangerous than salt when it comes to risk for heart disease. He says that refined sugar is similar to cocaine—a white crystal extracted from sugar cane rather than coca leaves—and that studies show it can be even more addictive than the recreational drug.<sup>{3}</sup>

The article is extensive but Dr. DiNicolantonio points out that rats, addicted to cocaine, will choose sugar over cocaine when given the choice. My own personal contention is that

Keystone Light, beer and alcohol in general, is so similarly addictive because the sugar in it has a similar effect, in addition to the deleterious effects of the alcohol. I'm reminded that people trying to quit alcohol often become 'hooked' on candy. This is also why it's almost impossible to break an addiction to alcohol outside of serious nutritional support—and the same is true for processed sugar.

Of processed sugar itself—not to be confused with the sugar naturally found in fruit and vegetables—there are serious health issues.

- 1 Added sugar contains no essential nutrients and is bad for your teeth. [All the nutrients are stripped out in processing.]
- 2 Added sugar is high in fructose, which can overload your liver. [Fructose is exclusively processed in the liver which has a limited capacity to do so. The end result is that the fructose is converted directly to stored fat.]
- 3 Overloading the liver with fructose can cause non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.
- 4 Sugar can cause insulin resistance, a stepping stone towards metabolic syndrome and diabetes.
- 5 The insulin resistance can progress to type II diabetes.
- 6 Sugar can give you cancer.
- 7 Due to its effects on hormones and the brain, sugar has unique fat-promoting effects. Fructose doesn't cause satiety in the brain or lower the hunger hormone ghrelin nearly as much as glucose.
- 8 Because it causes massive dopamine release in the brain, sugar is highly addictive.
- 9 Sugar is a leading contributor to obesity in both children and adults.
- 10 It ain't the fat ... it's sugar that raises your cholesterol and gives you heart disease.<sup>{4}</sup>

The question isn't whether processed sugar in its many forms is harmful. It is. The question is: How do you get off of this roller coaster ride?

At the risk of sounding like a broken record, juicing goes a long way as does a vegan diet. (It is, after all, providing complete sugar, including the enzymes necessary to digest it.) When you flood your body with nutrients the craving for processed sugar naturally diminishes. Does the craving ever go away? Is there a day when I don't want a can or 2 of Keystone Light? The answer is, not really. It becomes more of a matter of losing one's interest. When you start giving your body what it needs nutritionally, it becomes satisfied, placated really, and the desire for sugar and other unhealthy food drops tremendously. Fasting helps, tremendously.

At the same time, it's extremely important to stay off of processed food, which is loaded with not only processed sugar but a plethora of chemicals that trigger hunger. That first Snicker's bar readily makes you want a second.

When my mother was alive, come Halloween time we had to keep the bags of candy (we give out boxes of raisins these days) hidden or my mother would eat the whole bag if she found it. Processed sugar is that addictive!

To be sure, not having it in the house helps too. You can't eat what's not there.

More than anything else, the process of getting off of processed sugar (processed flour, caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes ... anything really) requires the resolution to do so. Too, when you make a commitment to make 90%-95% of your diet vegan, staying off of processed sugar becomes—well, I was going to say 'a piece of cake', but I'll leave it at doable. It is tough, but it can be done.