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# Introduction



**Welcome to the Sugar Free Challenge Guidebook!** The Sugar Free Challenge was born out of a personal desire to break my sugar habit, plus the desire to help others do the same. Doing a diet challenge in a group situation usually makes it easier to stick to a goal. So, the Sugar Free Challenge was created.

As your host, I want to give you a brief idea of my background and what type of support I can offer. I also want to give you a brief introduction as to what the Challenge is about, how to use this book, and what you can expect.

My name is Carrie Forrest and I have had a problem with sugar for much of my life. I didn't have a stable childhood and turned to candy for comfort. This began a downward spiral of sugar addiction, binge-eating disorder, and health problems. Once I reached my early 20s, I was a mess. It wasn't until many years later that I finally turned my health around.

During that time, I earned a masters degree in public health nutrition and started a blog, Clean Eating Kitchen. I also sought professional counseling for my eating disorders. After a lot of hard emotional work and education, I have finally found a place of balance and a repaired relationship with myself and with food. Sugar is still very tempting for me, but it no longer rules my life.

I created the Sugar Free Challenge as a way to test my self-discipline and to break my dependence on sugar for comfort. While I am not 100% sugar free all the time, I do try to do the Sugar Free Challenge at least a few times a year. We will talk more about long-term choices in regards to sugar later in this book.



## Here is what you can expect from the Sugar Free Guidebook:

- 🍏 Four weeks of sugar free meal plans, recipes, and general information about the process
- 🍏 Motivation and support to challenge yourself to go sugar free
- 🍏 Information about cutting back on sugar or staying sugar free for the long-term

## What I expect from you:

- 🍏 That you consider this information to be general in nature, and not medical advice
- 🍏 That you clear any changes to your diet or supplement routine with your medical professional. This is especially important if you are currently taking any medication to lower your blood sugar
- 🍏 Lastly, that you understand that I am not a licensed healthcare provider and that I am not making any specific recommendations or taking any liability for your health situation



That said, the information in this book has been researched and is supported by basic nutritional science. The idea is to cut out processed and added sugars for 30 days, without eliminating natural sugars from fruits or whole foods, if that is appropriate for you. You can find the complete “rules” of the Challenge in Chapter 1.

Now that we’re on the same page, **I want to officially welcome you to the Sugar Free Challenge.** You should be commended for having the courage to think about your relationship with sugar. I have personally benefited from doing these Challenges, and I know how hard it can be.

If you haven’t joined the Facebook group for this Challenge, you can do so here:



Click Icon to Join!

You will find encouragement and support in the group.

*Now let's get started!*



# Chapter 1



## Preparing to Go Sugar Free

Now that you've made the decision to go sugar free for at least 30 days, there are a few ways to get ready for this Challenge. This chapter will help you set a specific goal, understand the "rules" of the Challenge, and prepare your kitchen for 30 days of clean eating without sugar. As always, you should adapt the rules to meet your specific health situation and goals.

## Why Go Sugar-Free?

Most people would likely feel better on a low-sugar or no-sugar diet. But, it can be especially helpful for those having difficulties with blood sugar stabilization or inflammation such as sore joints or chronic pain. This can include those with pre-diabetes, diabetes, PCOS or other hormonal imbalances, or an autoimmune disease.

## Who Should Do the Sugar Free Challenge?

People who have diabetes or pre-diabetes should probably be on a sugar free or low-sugar diet, choosing real foods that have a low glycemic index. People who feel they are addicted to sugar, have high levels of inflammation, or who are looking to manage their hormones, energy, or weight could also possibly benefit from reducing or elimination added sugars from their diets.

Even if you don't have a health condition like pre-diabetes, a lot of people can have more energy and even lose a few pounds by doing sugar free for a month. If you feel like you've been over-indulging a little too much with sugar lately, then this is a great opportunity to see what going sugar free can do for you.



# Who Should NOT Do the Sugar Free Challenge?

Believe it or not, but there are some people who should not be on a restrictive diet, even one that limits sugar. People who have a serious eating disorder often do not benefit from diet challenges. People who are underweight or who are seriously ill should not do this Challenge. Please do consult your healthcare provider before making any changes to your diet or lifestyle.

## The “Rules” of the Challenge

I am not generally a fan of diet rules, but there are some guidelines for this Challenge. The main idea is to remove any processed or added sugars from your diet for a period of 30 days. The intent is by removing the sugar completely, that you will replace the sugar with healthier options and that your cravings and dependence on sugar will be reduced or eliminated.

## What are Added Sugars?

**Added sugars are any sugars that are not naturally occurring in the food you're consuming.** Added sugars are often included in processed foods or baked goods and can include sugars such as white or brown sugar, corn syrup, and dextrose or natural sugars like coconut sugar, maple syrup, and honey. Added sugars are commonly found in sweet snacks and candy, but can also be found in sauces, granola bars, non-dairy milk products, yogurt, frozen meals, and countless other processed foods.

It's best to eliminate processed foods as much as possible to ensure you're also cutting out sources of added sugar. If you do choose to purchase processed foods, be sure to read labels and familiarize yourself with the names that sugar hides under. A good rule of thumb is to look for the “Whole30 Approved” label as those products do not have added sugars.

Added sugars can also refer to sugar added into baked goods. For example, banana bread made with just bananas as the sweetener does not contain any added sugars. Banana bread made with bananas and maple syrup does contain added sugars.



# What is Not Allowed During Our Sugar Free Challenge

Added sugars, including cane sugar, honey, maple syrup, coconut sugar, brown sugar, molasses, or any other form of sugar that is added to food. See page 46 for a long list of the names that added sugars can be listed on an ingredient label.

## What is Allowed:

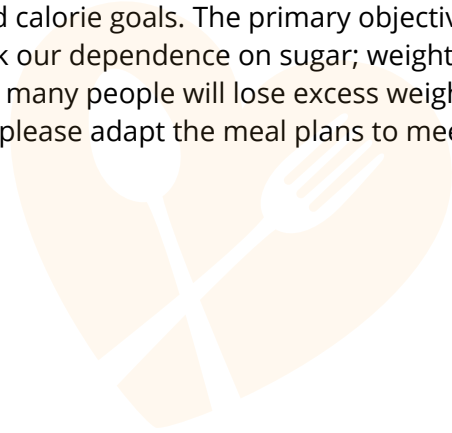
Fresh fruit, dried fruit (with no added sugar), and 100% fruit juices, assuming that fruit is appropriate for your health. Any other food that has no added sugar.

## Questionable “Grey Area” Items:

- Alcohol is allowed such as spirits, wine, and beer, but limited quantities would be recommended since alcohol turns to sugar in the body. No mixed drinks that have added sugar.
- Kombucha is another “grey area” food for this Challenge. If you drink kombucha, try to choose low-sugar options.
- Artificial or non-nutritive sweeteners can be used, but with caution as sweeteners can keep sugar cravings high. See page 45 for a list of acceptable sweeteners.

## Do the meal plans include calories?

The meal plans included in this Guidebook are just a guideline. Since every person is different, I have not included calorie goals. The primary objective of the Sugar Free Challenge is to break our dependence on sugar; weight loss is not the primary goal. That said, many people will lose excess weight just by cutting out added sugars. But, please adapt the meal plans to meet your individual needs and objectives.



# Can I eat carbs on a sugar free diet?

Yes, as long as that is appropriate for your health situation. A low sugar diet is not necessarily a low carbohydrate diet. You can still eat a sufficient amount of carbohydrates by consuming vegetables, low glycemic fruits, and whole grains. However, if you're following a low sugar diet to manage blood sugar and disorders like diabetes, you may want to consider the glycemic index of the carbohydrate sources you choose.

Foods with complex carbohydrates like whole grains and sweet potatoes or other root vegetables will be digested more slowly than processed carbs, which means they aren't dumped into your bloodstream for quick metabolism. You'll experience a slower rise in blood sugar, which will keep it steady until you're able to eat your next meal.





# Week 1 Meal Plan

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Breakfast	Healthy Egg Muffins (recipe page 21)	Stovetop Oatmeal (recipe page 23)	Healthy Egg Muffins leftovers	Healthy Egg Muffins leftovers	Stovetop Oatmeal leftovers	Protein Smoothie (recipe page 22)	Protein Smoothie leftovers
Optional Snack	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list
Lunch	Quinoa Salad with protein (recipe page 29)	Moroccan Chickpea & Chicken Soup (recipe page 28)	Quinoa Salad with protein leftovers	Moroccan Chickpea & Chicken Soup leftovers	Curry Chicken Wrap (recipe page 26)	Curry Chicken Wrap leftovers	Out or on your own
Optional Snack	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list
Dinner	Easy Chicken Tortilla Soup (recipe page 36)	Beef & Veggie Stir-Fry (recipe page 32)	Easy Chicken Tortilla Soup leftovers	Beef & Veggie Stir-Fry leftovers	Out or on your own	Black Bean & Ground Beef Chili (recipe page 33)	Black Bean Ground Beef Chili leftovers
Optional Dessert	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list	Choose from list

