# The Impact of Sugar on Depression

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## How Sugar and Depression Interact

Studies have shown that various food sources can greatly affect the severity of depression and its symptoms. If you're looking to start small, cutting sugar out of your regular diet may be enough to show a significant improvement in mood.

### What is Sugar?

Some sugar is required in our diets, but most people consume way more than is necessary. There are different forms of sugar, and just like fat, some are okay and some are not. Processed and refined sugars are the ones to watch for. These sugars are found in the vast majority of processed foods and often hide on ingredient labels under other names, such as glucose, fructose, and sucrose.

### Why is Sugar Bad?

Our body is meant to have a certain amount of sugar (or glucose) but when we consistently go over those limits it can wreak havoc in our bodies. Aside from the more common reasons as to why sugar isn't good for you, there are many ways sugar can cause more harm to those with a mental illnesses such as depression.

Sugar naturally causes a "sugar rush" as your blood sugar rises, which usually involves increased mood and energy until it wears off and leaves you feeling exactly the opposite - irritable, fatigued, and depressed. In addition to the fluctuations of blood sugar, here are some other ways the consumption of sugar can affect depression:

### B Vitamins

B vitamins take nutrients from the food we eat and turn them into the fuel that energizes us throughout the day. If you have a poor diet, the nutrients to keep you energized won't be there. Large amounts of sugar require B vitamins to be broken down, and without a healthy diet this could lead to a vitamin deficiency.

A proper amount of B vitamins, either through food or supplements, could aid in mood stabilization and the effectiveness of antidepressants. When these vitamins are depleted, the symptoms of depression may worsen, such as lethargy and irritability.

### Thyroid

Sugar also affects your thyroid, which controls how your body uses energy as well as regulating metabolism, growth and development, as well as body temperature. Your thyroid has also been said to have an affect on your mood as well.

## How to Fix It

Some may suggest a sugar detox to remove it from your system but that may be a bit to extreme for most. It is more important to be educated and understand how it affects you so that you can decide to make healthier choices in the future.

Keeping to a primarily whole foods diet (fruits, veggies, fish, nuts, seeds, and legumes) may be a better option, especially for those suffering from depression. It's a big lifestyle change though, and should be done slowly and ideally with the help of a dietician or nutritionist. If you start to change things up too quickly you could get discouraged or frustrated and resort back to old habits.

If you do choose to cut sugar from your diet, try to avoid processed foods and products with added sugars. Finding some alternatives such as fruit like raisins and applesauce and spices such as vanilla, cocoa and cinnamon may help to ease the transition.

Avoid artificial sweeteners as well, such as aspartame, sucralose, and splenda, as they still trigger an insulin increase, which could lead to further cravings and complications.

## Conclusion

Small lifestyle changes can help promote a healthier body and mind; decreasing your daily intake of sugar could significantly decrease the severity of depression and its symptoms. It doesn't have to be a dramatic change, but working with a dietician or nutritionist can help to keep you on the path to a healthier lifestyle and further the treatment of your depression.