

First - weigh yourself and take a picture if you can, this is for our eyes only (unless you want to share it with me)! At the end of the challenge, get back on the scale (not in-between) and take another picture. Share with me your experiences along the way and when it's over.

Each week I will give you a new assignment to either add or eliminate some food item from your diet. The idea is to focus on one main component of a healthy diet each week, building on what you've learned so at the end of the month, you will have completely overhauled your eating habits.

## **Week 1 - Sugar**

The typical American diet contains entirely too much sugar and this will be the hardest habit to break. For specific effects of sugar, see my [blog](#). This week we will cut sugar cold turkey. Besides actual sugar, sugar hides in many common foods we eat. Jams, jellies, syrup, honey, molasses, corn syrup, most peanut butters, salad dressings, sauces, milk, yogurts, and on and on. Become a label reader. If sugar is in the list of ingredients, skip it this week. The only exception is the natural sugars found in fruit, however, I would suggest you limit fruits to 2 servings a day if your goal is weight loss. You'll have to decide for yourself if you're comfortable substituting no or low calorie sweeteners for sugar, such as Stevia, Truvia, or xylitol. You also have to decide if artificial sweeteners are acceptable to you, such as Splenda (sucralose), or others on the market. You will find that you CRAVE sugar - just say NO!

## **Week 2 - (other) Carbohydrates**

We often think of breads, pastas, and potatoes as carbohydrates, but fruits and vegetables are also carbohydrates. While I don't believe carbohydrates make you fat, I can't deny that diets lower in carbs tend to help you shed unwanted pounds. For our challenge, I want to focus on non-processed carbohydrates. Focus on eating as many vegetables as you want; think color! Bright greens, oranges, yellows, reds, purples! These veggies will give you a load of vitamins, minerals, and fiber. Focus on sweet potatoes, brown rice, quinoa, red potatoes, and limited whole wheat pastas for your "starchy" carbs. Two meals a day for these starchy carbs and serving size is key so stick to about 4 ounces for a healthy portion. If you find you're really grouchy, sluggish, or run down, you may want to increase your carb intake.

### **Week 3 - Fats**

Fats do not make you fat. Low fat diets simply don't work and there is ample evidence. The focus this week will be adding healthy fats into your diet. Some good examples of healthy fats are olive oils, avocados, nuts, and nut butters (no sugar added). Healthy does not mean unlimited. Pay attention to the serving size on the product container and include a healthy fat in at least 3 meals per day.

### **Week 4 - Protein**

Proteins are the building blocks our body needs to build muscle. You can get protein from both animal and plant products. Some great protein sources are fish, turkey, extra lean beef, chicken, venison, elk, buffalo, eggs, whey protein powder, as well as legumes. Try to get 4 4 oz (or equivalent) servings a day.

### **Summing It All Up**

General guidelines for weight loss:

Drink 2-3 L of water a day (64-100 oz)

Eat every 3-4 hours (helps with hunger and cravings)

Combine a protein, carbohydrate, and fat each meal

Avoid processed foods

Exercise at least 30 min a day 4-6 days a week

Allow yourself one "free" meal each week (special night out, dessert, pizza night... but limit this "Free" meal to just one meal, not a binge day)

### **Example Menu**

Breakfast - egg whites with fresh spinach (or onions and peppers for an omelet), a slice of Ezekiel toast with a smear of natural pb (Smuckers Natural PB has NO sugar added)

Mid Morning Snack - small green apple with pb or some pb mixed with plain Greek yogurt as a dip

Lunch - Grilled chicken with peppers and onions with fajita seasoning, low carb/high fiber tortilla and 1/2 small avocado

Mid Afternoon Snack - protein smoothie (1 scoop protein powder, frozen strawberries, and water blended smoothly)

Dinner - baked sweet potato with cinnamon, grilled (baked or broiled) lean sirloin or fish, VEGGIES, salad with olive oil and balsamic vinegar

Evening Snack - a celery stalk with pb or some fruit and cottage cheese