

21 day kick sugar program Reintroduction

You are now wrapping up the elimination portion of your plan and it is time to begin the reintroduction phase. Often the last few days leave you wondering how you'll ease back into your "normal" life, or what foods you want to splurge on now that the restrictions are over. Here are my recommendations on how to approach re-introducing foods:

1. If you were avoiding certain foods (typically gluten, dairy, sugar, soy, eggs, peanuts, nightshades, FODMAPS) as part of an elimination-provocation plan, you'll need to very carefully re-introduce them one at a time. Follow this protocol:

- The day after your program ends, choose one food to eat again – typically this will be the food you missed the most!
- Eat that food at all three meals along with whatever other foods you had been including in the elimination – meaning you ONLY re-introduce one potentially problematic food at a time and not more than one.
- DO NOT eat that food again for the following two days.
- Note any changes in the following FOR A FULL 72-HOURS AFTER EATING THE FOOD:
 - Mood
 - Energy
 - Appetite
 - Digestive function like bloating, gas, loose stool or diarrhea
 - Headaches
 - Inflammation
 - Brain fog or mental clarity.
- Your notes will be some of the best guides you have as to whether or not you are sensitive to the food you just re-introduced. Food sensitivity reactions can happen immediately but can also have delayed-onset for up to around 72 hours (3 days!).
- **NOTE:** I don't actually recommend EVER re-introducing gluten containing grains like wheat, barley, rye and oats into your diet, nor do I recommend making pasteurized dairy or unfermented soy products any regular part of your life. These foods are shown to contribute to a myriad of health problems and, typically, tend to crowd-out much more health promoting options like vegetables, well-raised meat & eggs and healthy, naturally occurring fats in the diet.

2. If you were on a plan to be stricter about avoiding food additives, sweeteners and other slightly processed foods, consider the following:

- How do you feel now that you've changed your food?
- How do you think you'll feel if you eat something you estimate is less-than-healthy for you?
- If you think you'll feel less-than-optimal, how long will that feeling last?
- Will the ill-health effects of the foods you want to eat again last more than a couple of hours? More than a day? More than a week?
- What will you be disrupting with the foods: blood sugar or digestive function?
- Has the time and energy commitment that's gone into avoiding the food(s) added more stress to your life than it alleviated signs and symptoms of ill health?
- Ultimately, it's up to you to choose what and how often you'll add certain foods back into your regularly scheduled food programming, but considering the above questions is a good idea. You'll become a lot more MINDFUL of your choices, rather than allowing them to become defaults simply because they are habits or they represent the easy way out. I tend to think that a food that initiates an acute blood sugar spike in an otherwise even situation day in and day out is *less* deleterious in the long term than foods that disrupt digestive function that may perpetuate for days or weeks on end and interfere with immunity in a more intense way.

3. If part of your elimination phase included a sugar detox, consider the following:

- What was your diet like before you removed the taste of sweet from your diet
- How do you feel now that you've reduced the amount of sugar or dense carbohydrates you've been eating?
- How has your sleep been? What about your digestive function?
- Do you think that eating sugary or carb-rich foods will make you feel better or worse?
- Has the time and energy commitment that's gone into avoiding sugar and dense carbs added more stress to your life than it alleviated your cravings and how much sugar or carbs has controlled your life and food choices?

4. More considerations and suggestions:

- For some, the dietary changed may have been enormous. If you were previously eating bread, cereal and pasta, then refer to point #1. You need to go SLOWLY when re-introducing foods, especially the ones that are highly allergenic like wheat, dairy, and soy.
- Consider how often you used to consume sweetened or carb-rich foods. It is up to you to decide whether adding some of those foods back in perhaps once a day versus at every meal will be something more livable for you on a regular basis. Fruit, for example, is a great way to enjoy a dessert or a treat.

- Consider whether you previously ate sweets or dense carbs as rewards, as comfort, or even just as part of a habit. Then consider whether or not eating them made you feel your best or helped you to reach your goals.
- Many people lose weight on elimination protocols, but this is not the primary goal of the program. If you did lose weight, recognize that the bite here or there of sweets that seemed innocent enough before may have been too much for you and for your goals. If your goal was not primarily weight loss but rather to break unhealthy habits and conquer cravings, think about how eating sweets again triggers the problems and causes a downward spiral, then become mindful and conscious when choosing what to eat on a daily basis.
- To safely and slowly add some naturally occurring sugars (like fruit) and starches back into your diet, take care to consider portions and the timing of these foods. Fruits should not be eaten alone if blood sugar regulation and cravings have been issues for you historically. Eat small portions of berries or half of a piece of fruit if you're not a very active person, or larger portions if you are more active. Starchy foods are best added back in on days when you are more active and specifically in the meal following your activity. Keep portions of starchy foods to a minimum otherwise, and don't allow them to monopolize your plate if weight loss maintenance is your goal. If simply avoiding cravings is your goal and you feel okay/don't have them when you add back in some starchy foods, then you can enjoy some root vegetables, tubers like sweet potatoes and squash more frequently. Continue to avoid refined foods including bread, pasta, cereal and other products made from flours and purchased in packages as these are never healthy options.