

SUGAR:

SMALL CHOICES: BIG IMPACT

A Letter Before We Begin

Dear Friend,

I've often been asked: "Dr. O, what's the one thing I should change about how I eat?" Here's the simple answer: cut back on sugar. Most of us eat a lot more than we think and it's hiding in places we often don't suspect.

Sugar shows up in the mouth first —where it can change the anatomical structure of your teeth, i.e. cavities. It goes on to spike your blood sugar, drop you into that mid-afternoon slump, stir up inflammation and can cause bloat. People come to accept this as 'it's just how I feel these days.'

It doesn't have to be. Not if you have a simple, doable plan to change some habits. Thirty days of cleaner eating is enough time to make a difference. We just want to adjust what you reach for out of habit, not that special dessert on a birthday. So, there's nothing you would have to give up forever.

This adjustment period isn't fueled by willpower either; willpower seems to run out right when you need it most. Instead, we're going to play 'Sugar Detective', collecting all the evidence. This will show you how your body responds to small choices you make that can have a big impact.

Let's explore Your Healthy Day to see how you can benefit from following these simple guidelines. Comment in our blog if this helps you and you'd like to see more like this.

— Dr. O

Your Healthy Day Guide

What follows is a simple program that lasts a week. You can stop there, or you can continue week by week until you are satisfied with where you are and the changes you have made. And hopefully you will be the better for it; have more energy and feel better too.

The real decisions happen in the grocery aisle, at the coffee counter, at three in the afternoon when your energy dips.

But the work really starts with what you do at home when you are not at work, out with friends at a restaurant, or at a party.

This program is pretty simple. What I'm going to ask of you is three quick check-ins, about ninety seconds all told: a **morning focus** (something to notice that day), a **4 PM energy check** (Good, Tired, or Craving), and an **evening win** (there's always at least one). Do

this honestly for a week and it'll teach you a lot about yourself. There's also a slight bit of field work, but hopefully this will be fun and interesting for you.

	The focus	What you'll be able to do
1 · See It	Reading labels and spotting hidden sugar	Read any ingredient list in thirty seconds and catch sugar in all its disguises
2 · Feel It	Blood sugar and the afternoon crash	Understand your own energy dips and beat them without a fight
3 · Time It	How often, not just how much	Space out your sugar so your body — and your gut — get a break
4 · Change the Default	Arrange your kitchen to support you	Arrange things so the better choice is easy

A few things to keep in mind: Treat all of this as an experiment. You're just seeing what happens when you incorporate these small adjustments into your habits.

One practical note. You can fill this out right on the screen or print it and use a pen — every box, line, and table works both ways.

BEFORE ANYTHING CHANGES

Your Body—Baseline

Before you change a thing, let's take a snapshot of where you are today. It takes about five minutes. The most trustworthy measurements are the everyday ones: how you feel in the afternoon, how often your stomach gives you trouble. Weigh yourself if you like, but honestly, your body has better ways of telling you how it's doing.

Date: _____

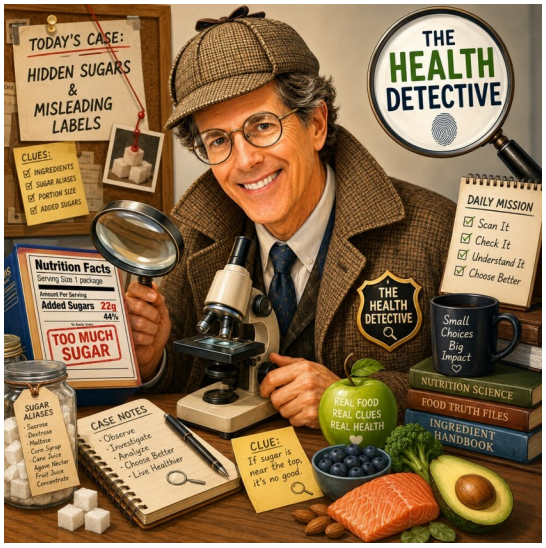
Measure	Your baseline
Energy, typical afternoon (1–10)	
Sleep quality, past week (1–10)	
Bloated days out of the last seven (0–7)	
Sugar-craving intensity, typical day (1–10)	
Post-meal heaviness (rare · sometimes · most meals)	
Optional: weight / waist	

WORTH KNOWING

For a lot of my patients, bloating is the first thing to improve. Here's why: sugar feeds the unfriendlies in your gut the same way it feeds them in your mouth. When they feast on sugar, they produce gas. Cut back on the sugar and that noisy crowd quiets down.

See It — The Case of the Hidden Sugar

"Aha — 'evaporated cane juice.' Alias number forty-one. "



The Health Detective opens the case file: hidden sugars and misleading labels.

The average American eats about twenty teaspoons of added sugar a day, and here's the thing — almost nobody decides to. It sneaks in through the yogurt you thought was a healthy breakfast, the pasta sauce, the bread, the salad dressing, anything the label calls a "drink" instead of a juice. The sugar you choose on purpose isn't really the problem. It's the sugar you never signed up for. So, this first week, start reading labels — slowly at first, and before long you'll be doing it in seconds flat.

How to read a label in four quick steps

The ingredient list is ranked by weight. Whatever's listed first, there's more of it than anything else. So, if a sweetener shows up in the top three, that product is basically a dessert — no matter what the front of the box says.

Watch the splitting trick. The manufacturers know you might check where sugar lands on the list, so they split it into three or four different names — a little cane sugar here, some brown rice syrup there, a bit of fruit juice concentrate — and each one drops lower down the list. Add them all back together and sugar would often be right at the top. It's the oldest trick in the book, and after this week, you'll never fall for it again.

Find "Added Sugars," then divide by four. Four grams equals one teaspoon. So, a label that says 22 grams of added sugar is really telling you five and a half teaspoons.

Would you spoon that onto your cereal yourself? Probably not — but someone at the factory already did it for you.

Don't trust the serving size. That "serving" is a number decided by regulators, not by real people eating real portions. Figure out how much you actually eat, then do the math.

Sugar's many disguises

Sugar goes by around sixty different names. You don't need to memorize them — just get familiar with the six families below, and the disguises stop fooling you for good.

Family	What you'll see	The Detective's note
The –ose gang	Sucrose, glucose, fructose, dextrose, maltose, lactose, crystalline fructose	Anything ending in – ose is chemistry's way of writing "sugar" in cursive.
The syrups	Corn syrup, HFCS, corn syrup solids, rice syrup, malt syrup, barley malt, golden syrup, sorghum, tapioca syrup	Syrup is just sugar that learned to pour. Eleven names, one job.
The "natural" costumes	Honey, agave nectar, maple syrup, molasses, coconut sugar, palm sugar, date sugar, raw sugar	Nicer origins, same math. Your body doesn't read the marketing.
Sugar with a passport	Turbinado, demerara, muscovado, panela, piloncillo, jaggery, succinate	Fancy names, well-traveled — but it's all just table sugar underneath.
The juice tricks	Fruit juice concentrate, evaporated cane juice, fruit nectar	Concentrated juice is sugar that used to know a fruit.
The lab coats	Maltodextrin, dextrin, glucose solids, anhydrous dextrose	Made to sound like ingredients instead of dessert. Keep an eye out for maltodextrin — it can spike your blood sugar even faster than table sugar.

FIELD MISSION · THE PANTRY AUDIT

Pick three suspects off your own shelves — a yogurt, a sauce, and something that calls itself breakfast is a good place to start. Don't throw anything out. We're just investigating it here, not cleaning house. Write down what you find below.

Product you looked at	Tot sugar in grams	÷ 4 = the # of tsp	'Aliases' found = still sugar	Verdict – What did you decide?

FIELD MISSION · THE GROCERY STAKEOUT

Next time you're shopping, find one product with three or more sugar aliases in a single ingredient list. If you spot one with five, give yourself a gold star — you've got a sharp eye.

Product and aliases discovered:

FIELD MISSION · ONE HONEST SWAP

Take the sugary product you buy most often and try its lower-sugar cousin in the same aisle — plain yogurt you sweeten yourself, a sauce with tomatoes listed first, a cereal that isn't candy in disguise. Just buy it once and give it a fair try. You're not committing to anything — you're taking it for a test drive.

What I swapped, and how it went:

CAMEO · THE SUGAR POLICE

"Don't do it. (We have no actual enforcement powers. But still — don't.)"

THE LOG

Assignment: 1) Read one label per day, slowly, and think in teaspoons. This will be powerful and insightful for you. 2) Fill out the log below – it's fillable.

Day	One change made, 1 label read, or how I feel today	4 PM · check your energy level	Evening · one win
Mon		□ Good □ Tired □ Craving	
Tue		□ Good □ Tired □ Craving	
Wed		□ Good □ Tired □ Craving	
Thu		□ Good □ Tired □ Craving	
Fri		□ Good □ Tired □ Craving	
Sat		□ Good □ Tired □ Craving	
Sun		□ Good □ Tired □ Craving	

The weekly pulse Afternoon energy (1–10): _____ Bloated days this week (0–7): _____ Cravings (1–10): _____

End of week-the best/worst label I read:

_____

One swap made or considered: _____

Dr. O's margin note — *"Getting good at this is just paying attention, over and over, until it sticks."*

Congratulations – Yippee. You've graduated by completing my weeklong Sugar Detective Program. But seriously, you've taken a big step in a lifetime commitment toward improved health and well-being. If you would like to continue, you can just repeat the program week by week and continue to benefit from it. And under no circumstances are you to get frustrated with any of it. One patient took 3 years to get off sugar – read more about him here.

If you would like to receive more reports or health articles in the future that I or my wife Victoria write, you can let us know by giving us your email.