

"Tiredness no longer



"Are you sleepy again, Mom?" Katherine Cobb's 6-year-old son, Tex, asked as he scooted in next to her on the couch. Though this mother of three had been fighting like mad not to admit it, in the end she could only take Tex in her arms and with a sigh say, "Yes, sweetie, I am." Here, Katherine shares how she outsmarted her surprisingly common energy thief.

"My life was happy and productive four years ago, but then it quickly took a nosedive," Katherine reveals. "I was working as a home-based ad exec and regional newspaper columnist when suddenly I found myself feeling sluggish, depressed and plagued by GI issues. Some days I couldn't get off the couch. I stopped meeting my work deadlines and the phone went unanswered. I tried to ante up dinner every evening, but I was often too drained to drag myself to the grocery store. And quality time with my kids and my husband, Greg, was usually limited to watching TV. I couldn't be the wife and mom I wanted to be. I felt like the living dead."

"Included in the mix of symptoms were headaches and muddled thinking—I frequently couldn't remember what I'd been doing 10 minutes earlier. And my fuse was so short that anything could set me off. I realized just how cranky I'd become when Tex innocently asked about a toy and I barked at him. My heart sank when that dear boy looked at me and said, 'I'm sorry for bothering you, Mom.'

"Most puzzling, I was dogged by insatiable carb cravings, especially for sweets. The very first thought in my head each morning was, *What treats can I eat today?*"

One-minute QUIZ

Could a biochemical glitch be draining your energy?

If you suffer from fatigue and two or more of the following, sugar sensitivity may be the culprit.

- Insatiable cravings for sweet foods (like candy, soda and juices) and refined white-flour foods (like bread, pasta, cereal and popcorn)
- Weight gain/difficulty shedding pounds
- Blue mood/irritability
- Reduced ability to cope with stress/high reactivity
- Poor memory and concentration
- Pain (headaches, joint aches, muscle aches)
- Severe PMS or perimenopausal/menopausal symptoms
- GI distress (bloat, cramps, diarrhea)



"The first thought in my head each day was about what sugary treats I could eat. But the scariest thing was, there was no joy in it."

—Katherine Cobb, 44, Charles Town, WV

rules my life!"

Consuming a pint of mint–chocolate chip ice cream in one sitting was a given, followed by candy bars, Ho Hos and chocolate-covered mini doughnuts as a chaser. And the scariest thing? There was no joy or satisfaction in it for me. My cravings took on a life of their own and simply became a must-have fix. I started to rely on sweets for energy, but a quick boost was always followed by a crash. It's no wonder I packed on 50 pounds.

Struggling for answers

"I knew something was wrong but had no idea what. Doctors sent me through test after test, but they, too, were stymied. Although they finally diagnosed me with IBS, the suggested diet changes brought no relief. So I gave up on the doctors and started looking for my own answers.

"Searching the library for anything to do with my symptoms, I found the book *The Sugar Addict's Total Recovery Program* by Kathleen DesMaisons, Ph.D. [Ballantine]. At first I figured, *Cute...another diet fad*. But as I began to read, I saw myself on every page. The author described sugar sensitivity—a biochemically driven addiction to sugar or carbs that triggers a cycle of cravings, depression, fog, stomach distress and irritability—and suggested a seven-step plan for healing the addiction through diet. I was skeptical yet intrigued enough to give it a try. And I was astonished that within just two weeks of taking the easy

first step of eating a breakfast loaded with protein and complex carbs, my energy and mood soared and my GI problems and sweet tooth eased.

Relief at last

"Going at my own pace, I added a new step every month or two. First I started keeping a food journal—my body finally had a voice! Then I expanded the protein-and-complex carb breakfast regimen to every meal, with sugar just at mealtimes. This was a pivotal step. I was honoring the new relationship I had with my body by passing up convenience foods. When I saw I could accomplish that, my self-esteem soared.

"I also started eating a nightly potato, which helps boost mood by producing serotonin. And I supplemented with vitamin C, B vitamins and zinc. At that point my cravings were stabilized, so I had no trouble dropping refined carbs and sugar from my diet altogether.

"For the first time in four years, I'm clear, productive and happy. The extra 50 pounds are vanishing and I'm on my way to my goal weight. Work is also going well—within the span of a week recently, a short story of mine was accepted for publication and I earned raves from a client when I completed a rush project that required out-of-state travel. And best of all, I got back in time to watch Tex catch for his Little League team!"

—as told to Hallie Potocki

Alert

Drinking fruit juice first thing in the A.M. sets up any woman for diet disaster

Starting the day with processed fruit juice (especially apple juice) can trigger fatigue and GI distress, even in women who don't have the biochemical glitch that leads to sugar sensitivity. That's because for one out of three women, *epithelial cells* in the intestine aren't able to digest large amounts of the sugar fructose in a single

sitting, says FIRST nutrition expert Ann Louise Gittleman, Ph.D. The effects include fatigue, bloat, flatulence and sugar cravings that can last for four hours after consuming a culprit food. Other fare that's linked to symptoms includes honey, mangoes, melons, pears, raisins and all products made with high-fructose corn syrup.

NEWS! Many doctors aren't aware of sugar sensitivity

! **Seventy percent of women have some degree of sugar sensitivity (SS)**, says Kathleen DesMaisons, Ph.D., author of *Potatoes Not Prozac* (Simon & Schuster, 2008).

! **Most doctors aren't familiar with SS. Yet there's a real biological culprit:** When levels of the mood-lifting neurotransmitters serotonin and endorphins are low, the body learns to crave sugar to boost mood. (Neurotransmitter shortfalls also lead to pain and GI symptoms.)

! **The body of a sugar-sensitive woman overreacts to simple sugars and refined carbs**, so blood sugar spikes higher and faster than in non-SS women. The result is frequent, severe blood sugar crashes that trigger fatigue, depression, irritability, anxiety and intense sugar cravings for another feel-good rush to alleviate those symptoms.

WHAT CAN HELP

▶ **Eat this type of protein at meals**
Enjoying 1 oz. to 4 oz. of tryptophan-rich protein (like chicken, beef, cottage cheese, lentils, eggs and almonds) with meals slows the rate at which sugar enters the bloodstream, reducing sugar spikes and easing symptoms. And tryptophan is a serotonin building block that controls compulsive eating and elevates mood in SS sufferers.

▶ **Snack on carbs at these times**
Carb-only snacks (like a baked potato, popcorn and berries) shuttle tryptophan into the brain for conversion to serotonin. Key times to snack: between 2 P.M. and 4 P.M. (when serotonin levels dip) and before bed (to usher in deep sleep, which is linked to blood sugar control).

▶ **Bring on an endorphin rush**
To boost endorphins naturally, DesMaisons advises listening to music, walking, being intimate with your partner or praying.