



Tasty Food without the Guilt: Decreasing Salt, Sugar and Fat in Food.

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Growing up, I always enjoyed visiting my Grandmother's house on Sundays, because she would make the biggest Sunday "seven colours" dinner you could wish for. It would be a spread of fried chicken, creamed spinach, sweet pumpkin, beetroot, coleslaw, mashed potato and desserts - that you would never be too full for. It was the tastiest meal around, but then things changed, granny got high blood pressure and diabetes and her food just became boiled and bland. The doctors had said she should avoid using sugar and salt and all those different fats that made the food taste so good. This is the reality for many people who are trying to eat more healthily and thus avoid using fat, sugar and salt in their food. The food becomes bland and tasteless. However, this does not have to be the case.

I cook for granny now and my food is just as tasty without all the salt, sugar and fat. There are easy ways to still cook your favourites, so full of flavour, but with less of the 'bad' foods. How, you may ask? Well, let me show you!

SALT

So before we talk how, let discuss why. Starting with salt. Salt, as it's commonly known, is made of the mineral sodium chloride. Natural salt is present in the tissues of both animals and plants. Salt is essential for basic human survival. We need to have salt in our diet, I mean saltiness is a basic human taste¹. However, there is such a thing as too much.

Too much salt causes our bodies to retain extra water and thus increases our blood pressure. This increase in blood pressure puts strain on the heart, kidneys and brain and can lead to deadly events like heart attacks and strokes.

On a daily basis adults should be eating a **maximum of 6g** of salt², most of us consume much more than that. Most of the salt we eat is “hidden salt” in processed foods. On average only 20% comes from the salt we add while cooking or at the table.

How to reduce salt intake

- Get rid of your salt shaker or at least stop adding extra salt at the table.
- Read labels and avoid buying foods that contain large amounts of salt like packet soup, stock cubes, preserves, sauces and certain spices.
- Learn to cook using other seasoning such as fresh, frozen or dried herbs, onions, garlic, chillies, ginger, cinnamon, lemon juice, pepper and vinegar². Be aware that many spices have salt added to them.

SUGAR

Without getting into the debate on whether sugar is an additive or not, most of us love sweet things and to some extent, we all have a sweet tooth, that’s because sweetness is another basic taste.

Sugar, like salt, is not bad in moderation, it’s the amount that we consume that can be worrisome. Sugar contains energy without other nutritional benefits and having too much can increase your weight and lead to obesity, thereby increasing your risk of various chronic diseases.

How to cut down on sugar

Firstly, like salt, it’s the hidden sugar that most of us need to be most concerned about. Many processed foods like sauces, certain cereals and baked goods contain large amounts of added sugar. Not to mention the huge amounts in sugar sweetened drinks.

Due to the fact that processed and store bought foods often contain too much sugar, it is advisable to prepare your food at home, in the healthiest possible way. Preparation without sugar was a challenge to me when it came to making scrumptious foods such as pumpkin and glazed carrots for that Sunday lunch. However, you can substitute sugar in the following ways to make sure you stick to the sugar intake guidelines. For more on these guidelines visit <http://futurelife.co.za/much-sugar-consume/>.

- Don’t add sugar to already sweet foods. Foods like carrots and pumpkin have a natural sweet taste that can be enhanced by adding ingredients like cinnamon instead of sugar.
- Honey can be used as a sugar alternative. Honey contains beneficial anti-inflammatory properties and vitamins and minerals. Be aware that honey is still energy dense and can spike sugar levels, so usage should be limited.

- In baking, substitute some sugar with a fruit puree such as apple or banana. Not only are you decreasing the sugar but increasing fibre and nutrients.
- Sweeteners, such as xylitol, agave and stevia are also widely available lower calorie sugar substitutes to use in baking³.

FAT

Fat is a necessary part of the diet with many vital functions to perform, however, all fats are not made equally. There are good fats which are your unsaturated fats and bad fats which are saturated and trans- fats. Unsaturated fats are considered to be most “heart healthy” options. These good fats are normally liquid at room temperature and derived from plant sources, although omega-3 fatty acids from fish are also great. The bad, saturated fats are those that can clog up arteries. These saturated fats are normally solid at room temperature and derived from animal sources⁴.

As much as fat can add taste to food, it can also lead to weight gain because it is extremely energy dense. Adding extra fat to food is increasing the energy content of that meal and this extra energy can lead to weight gain. While we need some good fats, even these need to be limited for weight management. So how do you make delicious meals without adding the extra fat? Easy, it’s all in the way you cook.

Many methods of cooking still enhance the flavour of food without the need to add additional fat. Try the following cooking methods instead of frying:

- Grilling
- Braai
- Steaming
- Poaching
- Baking and roasting
- Sautee and stir frying
- Braising and stewing

When choosing your red meat, choose cuts that are lean or remove extra fat from meat prior to cooking. Remove the skin and excess fat from poultry in the same manner. Fish is a lean animal protein source and it contains the best fat there is, omega-3 fatty acids³.

Also it’s important to remember is that you should limit sauces that are high fat, like mayonnaise, certain salad dressings and gravy. Go for a lower fat option like a vinegar based dressing or “lite”

mayonnaise to decrease the fat. When making your own sauce, fight the urge to use cream and rather add low-fat milk, it is the small changes that make a big difference in the long run^{1,5}.

SHOPPING

One last tip to make sure you not consuming more sugar, salt and fat then you should is to read the labels of the foods that you buy. Use the following robot colour guide to help you decide what to buy. Green means good to go, orange, you should limit and red, rather stay away⁶.

Nutrient (per 100g)	Low	Moderate	High
Fat	<3g	3-20g	>20g
Saturated fat	<1.5g	1.5-5g	>5g
Sugar	<5g	5-15g	>15g
Sodium (salt)	<120mg	120-600mg	>600mg

So next time your friend or family member with a lifestyle disease comes along for dinner, don't feel limited, get creative. Rather make these simple changes and your meals can still be tasty and enjoyed by the whole family. We should all be eating more carefully in any event, prevention is better than cure. Enjoy experimenting and using these newly learned tips on how to make food delicious without being deadly.

WHERE DOES FUTURELIFE® FIT IN?

Sugar

FUTURELIFE® products contain added sugar in limited amounts that are in line with the WHO guidelines and would not contribute excessively to your daily allowance. We also have products with no added cane sugar such as our FUTURELIFE® Zero Smart food™ and FUTURELIFE® Zero with Oats. Below is a table summarising the total sugar content of some FUTURELIFE® products per serving.

Products and sugar content per serving	Amount of sugar (all forms of sugar, natural (including lactose) and added)
50g FUTURELIFE® HIGH ENERGY Smart food™	7.5 g (1.5 tsp of sugar)
50g FUTURELIFE® HIGH PROTEIN Smart food™	6g
40g FUTURELIFE® ZERO Smart food™	3.5g (zero added cane sugar)
40g FUTURELIFE® ZERO with Oats	0.8g (zero added cane sugar)
FUTURELIFE® High Protein LITE SmartBar	4.5g - 5.4g
50g FUTURELIFE® Smart Oats®	7.6g (1.5 tsp of sugar)

Salt

As per the table below, all relevant FUTURELIFE® products already meet the guidelines for both the 2016 as well as the 2019 Sodium reduction regulations. FUTURELIFE® products can therefore be enjoyed without the concern of consuming excessive amounts of salt.

PRODUCT	Sodium (mg) per 100g	Does it comply to regulations for 2016	Does it comply to regulations for 2019 max total sodium 400mg/100g
FUTURELIFE® HIGH ENERGY Smart Food™	284	Yes	Yes
FUTURELIFE® HIGH PROTEIN Smart Food™	360		
FUTURELIFE® CRUNCH Smart Food™ (original)	216		
FUTURELIFE® CRUNCH Smart Food™ (Chocolate)	238		
FUTURELIFE® ZERO Smart Food™	348		
FUTURELIFE® ZERO With Oats™	251		
FUTURELIFE® Smart Oats®	281		
FUTURELIFE® KIDS Smart Food™	367		
FUTURELIFE® KIDS Smart Oats®	165		

Fat

Most FUTURELIFE® products have a moderate total fat content, lying on the lower side of the “moderate” range, the same can be said for the saturated fat content. Further to this, almost all of the FUTURELIFE® products including FUTURELIFE® HIGH ENERGY Smart food™, FUTURELIFE® HIGH PROTEIN Smart food™ and FUTURELIFE® Smart White Bread™ are high in Omega-3 fatty acids.

References

1. Understanding Nutrition by Eleanor Noss Whitney, Sharon Rady Rolfes May 25, 2004
2. <https://authoritynutrition.com/how-much-sodium-per-day/>
3. <http://www.bloodpressureuk.org/microsites/salt/Home/Howtoeatlesssalt/Cooking>
4. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/food/0/22653786>
5. <http://www.healthline.com/health/heart-disease/good-fats-vs-bad-fats#1>
6. Krause's Food & the Nutrition Care Process, 14e (Krause's Food & Nutrition Therapy) 14th Edition by L. Kathleen Mahan MS RD CDE (Author), Janice L Raymond MS RD CD (Author)
7. <http://cookingfromtheheart.co.za/healthy-eating-made-easy/food-labels/reading-food-labels>

