

Sugar - The most  
important WADS item

# Why?

- Can have a huge impact on nutritional balance, performance levels, internal processes and therefore results!
- 4 key factors that are particularly relevant for women over 40.
- All directly or indirectly affect sugar cravings.
- Not just about 'willpower'.
- Signals from your body responding to:
  - Sleep Deprivation
  - Stress
  - Hormonal Shifts
  - Peer Pressure & Social Cues

# Sugar Factor 1: Sleep Deprivation

When sleep is short or broken your appetite hormones are greatly impacted:

- **Ghrelin (hunger hormone) increases** and means you feel hungrier overall
- **Leptin (fullness hormone) decreases** and means it's harder to feel satisfied
- **Insulin sensitivity drops** which increases the bodies inclination to quick energy sources

Why sugar specifically? Because your brain is tired and wants fast fuel. Cookies, chocolate, and carbs are the quickest dopamine hit when you're running on fumes.

**Over 40 factor:** Night sweats, early waking, and lighter sleep stages make this cycle more pronounced.

# Sugar Factor 2: Stress

Stress raises cortisol, and cortisol loves sugar.

Here's what happens:

- Cortisol tells your body to stock up on energy
- Sugar temporarily lowers stress chemicals in the brain
- You get a short-term calm, followed by a crash, followed by more cravings

This is why cravings often hit:

- Late afternoon
- After emotionally draining interactions
- When you finally sit down at night

**Over 40 factor:** Juggling careers, aging parents, kids, relationships - and less recovery time! The nervous system is constantly on and sugar can become self-medication.

# Sugar Factor 3: Hormonal Shifts

As oestrogen and progesterone fluctuate:

- **Insulin resistance increases.** Can cause blood sugar spikes & crashes.
- **Progesterone drops.** Can result in a less calming effect and more emotional cravings.
- **Oestrogen swings.** This affect serotonin and sugar can temporarily boost mood.

Result? Stronger, more frequent cravings, especially for sweets and refined carbs.

**Over 40 factor:** During perimenopause, hormones can change week to week, so cravings may feel unpredictable or suddenly intense, even if your diet hasn't changed.

# Sugar Factor 4: Peer Pressure & Social Cues

Cravings aren't just biological - they're socially conditioned!

Common scenarios:

- “We deserve this” dessert culture
- Office snacks, birthday food
- Family habits formed over decades

There's also emotional pressure:

- Not wanting to seem “difficult”
- Using food as connection, comfort, or reward
- Internal scripts like “I've been good all day”

**Over 40 factor:** Social rituals are deeply ingrained by now, and metabolism is less forgiving, so the same foods create bigger blood sugar swings than they did at 30.

# What can I do?

Cravings are not a failure. They're information. Your body is asking for rest, safety, balance, or relief.

- Sleep Deprivation: Fix sleep before fixing food
  - Eat enough during the day (undereating ruins sleep)
  - Stop caffeine by early afternoon
  - Add a wind-down ritual (dim lights, stretch, warm shower)
- Stress: Lower stress in the moment
  - 4-6 slow breaths
  - Step outside for fresh air
  - 2 min meditation
- Hormonal Shifts: Stabilize blood sugar (without cutting carbs)
  - Eat protein first at meals
  - Add fat and fibre every time (olive oil, avocado, nuts, veggies)
  - Don't skip meals to "be good", that backfires later!
- Peer Pressure & Social Cues: Eat sugar on purpose (not reactively)
  - Choose sugar deliberately
  - Sit down, slow down, enjoy it fully
  - When sugar isn't "forbidden" the urgency drops

# From here...

- Sleep Deprivation and stress:
  - Good sleep hygiene and stress reducers
- Hormonal Shifts:
  - Post best high-protein snacks and/or sugar alternatives in the Challenge group (with macros if you can!)
- Peer Pressure & Social Cues:
  - Nutrition-focused mindset calls coming up over the next 2 weeks!

# Takeaways/ Questions