# TOP TIPS FOR *cutting down* ON STIMULANTS


## A VICIOUS CYCLE

Many of us are caught up in a vicious cycle of stress, sugar and stimulants, which leaves us feeling tired, depressed and stressed much of the time. Once you are aware of this, you can use this as your motivation to change.

## CHANGING HABITS

Changing any food habit can be stressful in itself, so it's best not to quit everything in one go. A good strategy is to avoid something for a month and then see how you feel.

## WHICH STIMULANTS?

Find out which stimulants are most important to you, by completing the 'Breaking Stimulant Addictions?' grid in the next section over one week and ask yourself several questions:

### QUESTION 1:

Which substance, if any, do you have in one form or other several times a day?

### QUESTION 2:

Which do you use as a pick-me-up, perhaps to get you out of bed in the morning or when your energy is flagging during the day?

### QUESTION 3:

Which would you find the hardest to stop completely for a month?

## COFFEE DRINKERS & COFFEE

Coffee drinkers don't feel any better than people who never drink coffee. They just feel better than they did when they first woke up! All coffee does is relieve the symptoms of coffee withdrawal. To find out what effect it has on you, quit for just two weeks.

You may get withdrawal symptoms for up to 3 days (e.g. headaches, irritability). These reflect how addicted you've become. After this, if you begin to feel perky and your health improves, that's a good indication you're better off without coffee.

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## CIGARETTES

If you smoke, talk to your doctor about alternative ways to become a non-smoker. Smoking drains your body of certain vitamins and minerals, so be sure to supplement your diet.

## TOP TIP!

Get your blood sugar balance under control before becoming a non-smoker. It will make the process much easier as your moods are likely to be more stable and the cravings less severe.

## PICK ONE!

Pick one stimulant you use frequently (other than cigarettes, which takes a different strategy). Could you reduce your intake too?

## TARGETS

Set yourself similar targets for up to 3 stimulants. Sometimes they overlap. For example, if you can't stand coffee without sugar, then cutting out sugar means no coffee.

## TEA

Tea (including green tea and Earl Grey) contains caffeine and tannin, which interferes with the absorption of essential minerals, such as iron and zinc. If you're addicted to tea, try stopping for 2 weeks and see how you feel. One cup of weak tea a day is ok.

## SOFT DRINKS

Cola contains as much caffeine as a cup of coffee and is high in sugar or artificial sweeteners, so its net stimulant effect can be considerable. Stay away from drinks containing caffeine, chemical additives, artificial sweeteners or colourings.

## SUGAR

Reduce sugar in hot drinks and food, eat less dried fruit, dilute fruit juice and cut out squash. Also check for hidden sugar in prepackaged food. If you want something sweet, have fruit or try xylitol (plum sugar). It takes about a month for a preference for less sweet foods to kick in. After that, most people lose the taste for sugar.

## REDUCE CRAVINGS

Reduce cravings with an excellent BSB diet, a good breakfast, and avoid going hungry, to keep your blood sugar balanced.

# BREAKING *stimulant* ADDICTIONS

Ideally, you want to cut out stimulants for a month to gauge the effect they are having on you.

However, start by cutting down gradually. Record your current intake in the day 1 row now and then use this grid to set your daily targets and record your progress.

Note that 1 alcohol unit = 1 small glass of wine / 1 bottle of beer / 1 shot of spirits.

Reduce stimulant use each week until your addiction is broken. If you are having more than 10 stimulant units a week, this is going to have at least some impact on your wellbeing. If you score 30 or more this could well be contributing to health and mood problems and can also impact the speed at which you lose weight. Set your target to reduce to no more than 15-17 per week and less if you can manage it! Occasional use is then okay.

| | sweets | tea / coffee | fizzy drink | chocolate | alcohol | added sugar | total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| day 1 | | | | | | | |
| day 2 | | | | | | | |
| day 3 | | | | | | | |
| day 4 | | | | | | | |
| day 5 | | | | | | | |
| day 6 | | | | | | | |
| day 7 | | | | | | | |
| target | none | 1 a day | 1 a week | 100g a week | 5 units a week | 1 tsp a week | |