



**The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast  
Episode 4 Show Notes**

**The Science of Sugar Addiction: A Look at the Latest Research with Dr. Nicole Avena**

Welcome to today's episode of *The Good Clean Nutrition Podcast* with your host, integrative dietitian, Mary Purdy, where healthcare practitioners and health-minded consumers are provided with expert information on current and trending topics.

Today's guest offers expert insight into the science and latest research of sugar addiction. Dr. Nicole Avena is a true pioneer in the field of food addiction, an acclaimed research neuroscientist, published author, sought after speaker, and nutrition and diet expert whose research started the exploration into food addiction.

To begin the episode, Dr. Avena shares what drove her interest in studying food addiction, specifically addiction to sugar. There was much talk around obesity when she began her PhD at Princeton University, so she decided to center her dissertation around the topic. She approached it from the perspective of the addictive qualities of many processed foods rather than why psychologically people are driven to overeat. Now, this project has become the core of her career.

Dr. Avena's definition of food addiction is based on the American Psychiatric Association criteria for any addiction, be it drugs, alcohol, etc. Binging, withdrawal signs, cravings and the inability to quit are all factors of food addiction. It's important for people struggling with food addiction to understand that the dependency goes beyond psychological factors. When speaking of sugar addiction, Dr. Avena clarifies that she is referring specifically to refined, highly processed sugars. There are a lot of negative effects of excessive sugar intake, including obesity, health risks and the weakening of the immune system. She warns that most people are consuming more added sugar than they realize and urges listeners to limit added sugars in all possible areas.

Dr. Avena reveals that sugar addiction often is a result of displaced emotions. She has found that many people are able to correct this habit once they become aware of it. Early life trauma can put people at risk for maladaptive behaviors, including addiction, but these behaviors aren't irreversible. She shares tips for differentiating a true sugar addiction rather than just a craving for something sweet. Balancing macronutrients is key in overcoming sugar addiction.

With a background in childhood nutrition, Dr. Avena offers advice for introducing sweet foods to young kids. Research suggests limiting sugars early in life is very important now more than ever. Even baby food is sweetened, which trains a baby's palette to expect sweetened foods rather than the true taste of vegetables. The best way to avoid sugar addiction is to prevent it from happening in the first place through education. If you're in the throes of addiction, it's more effective to tackle it in incremental steps rather than all at once. Additionally, Dr. Avena shares her opinions on natural sweeteners such as honey and maple syrup. Reducing the amount of sweetness in your diet will help change the brain in a way that will reduce cravings and overcome addiction.



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Watch Dr. Nicole Avena's Orgain Professional Education Webinar, [What Sugar Does to Your Brain: The New Science of Sugar Addiction](#), available on-demand with CPEU credit available for registered dietitians.

Learn more about Dr. Avena and her work on her [website](#).

Connect with Dr. Avena on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), and [LinkedIn](#).

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