Experts say that the last decade has seen a tremendous increase in sugar consumption, leading to several lifestyle diseases, the most common one being diabetes. Take the example of 43-year-old Sharad Tiwari, who thought that a small slab of chocolate every night after dinner was no big deal. It was only when routine tests detected something amiss that a shocked Sharad was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Obesity bariatric surgeon Dr Abhay Agrawal says that today, loading of sugar in the system is so high that every part of your body is layered with thick sugar. The minute you finish your meal, you keep that little space in your stomach for dessert. Your eyes are always glued to sweets available around you. Just eating one is not enough, you ask for more and more without realising that you have completed the packet. This dependency or craving for more is addiction to sugar. Sugar is as addictive as a drug, alcohol or tobacco. Just like these, sugar causes the release of the hormone dopamine — a feel good hormone, making you feel high immediately. The feeling is so soothing that the brain signals for more craving sugar to feel the same high," says Dr Agrawal.

Add physician endocrinologist, diabetologist, antiaging specialist and obesity consultant Dr Deepak Chaturvedi, "The threshold of sweetness has gone so high that we now don’t feel the sweetness of natural sources. Artificial sugar is available everywhere — in our kitchen, dining table, restaurants, etc. Sugary sweets are the part of every good, bad and ugly occasion. Sugar is addictive and the withdrawal symptoms are as bad as those of tobacco and alcohol. Excessive sugar consumption is directly associated with hyperinsulinemia, insulin resistance, obesity and subsequently pancreas exhaustion and diabetes mellitus."

Nutritionist Carlyne Remedios says that when we talk about sugar, it does not just mean the table sugar that we add to our cup of tea in the morning or that piece of chocolate we eat post lunch. "Unfortunately, these are only the most obvious sources of sugar. The ones that we don’t see is the sugar hidden in ketchups, ready-to-eat meals, cold drinks, bakery goods and low fat versions of foods. Excess in sugar amounts is a leading cause of dyslipidemia (high levels of triglycerides and low levels of HDL — the good fats), a leading cause of cardiovascular disease. Excessive intake of sugar also leads to obesity, which is one of the leading causes of diabetes. India is only second to China when it comes to the number of diabetics. We have approximately 63 million diabetics, which is expected to rise to over a 100 million by 2030," she says.

**HOW DOES SUGAR CAUSE PROBLEMS?**

"Sugar stimulates the hedonic pleasure centres in the brain and thus has propensity for compulsion and addiction. Excessive sugar intake suppresses sex steroids (testosterone, estrogen, progesterone, DHEA etc) and has adverse effects on overall, sexual and reproductive health. It also causes the sudden release of insulin from the pancreas leading to hyperinsulinemia and subsequently insulin resistance, which, in turn, is associated with obesity, hyperlipidemia and diabetes. Insulin resistance is also associated with PCOD, hirsutism, skin pigmentation and even premature ageing. Hyperlipidemia is associated with compromised cardiac health. Finally, excessive sugar intake is associated with dental problems," Dr says Chaturvedi.

All carbohydrates ultimately break down into sugar but the problem is that sucrose or table sugar is made up of glucose plus fructose, and fructose is not metabolised the same way as other carbohydrates. "In fact it tricks our brains into thinking that you aren’t full and that is why we keep craving more. In addition, this excess fructose gets stored in our livers causing fatty liver. Fructose is present in almost all foods in the market today — ready-to-eat meals, ketchups, canned fruit juices and nectars, cold drinks, low fat varieties of foods, etc. So, even though we might cut out the most obvious sources of sugar we need to be aware of the homemade or canned fruits, have diminished antioxidants and lack fibre leading to accumulation of concentrated intake. In a place like India where sweets define festivals, adding sugar becomes inevitable. People need to realise that a lead a sugar-free life," Agrawal.

**HOW TO REDUCE SUGAR**

**CONSUMPTION**

- Start by gradually reducing amount of sugar you put everyday.
- Look out for these words — sugar, glucose, high fructose corn syrup.
- The next time you feel for a sugar rush, grab a cut the craving.
- If you are addicted to so and cannot give them up, dilute some fresh juice or drink some water and slowly we self off.
- Give yourself time. It least four weeks for your accept change but once you are no sugar to your freshness, energy and weight easily.
- If your cravings disturb today life then you still might need underlying metabolic deficiencies, stress or an appropriate treatment.
- Sugar cravings with a high cause are mitigated...