

# Sugar-free

## FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

Helping your family cut back on sweet treats is a piece of cake!

**A** glass of soft drink with dinner, a Mars bar after sport or an iceblock on a hot summer day – most parents know when they're giving their kids a high-sugar treat. But there are other secretly sweet snacks that we should be wary of, warns *I Quit Sugar for Life* author Sarah Wilson (pictured left). Here, she explains that a few smart choices – and some clever recipes – can help you easily cut back on the hidden sugar in your family's diet.

### What are some of the dangers of too much sugar?

Metabolic syndrome is a term increasingly being recognised in the Australian medical profession. It covers issues such as obesity, type 2 diabetes and possibly ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder). All these contemporary diseases are part of metabolic syndrome, which stem from insulin issues from sugar.

### What are some seemingly healthy kid snacks that are actually high in sugar?

Fruit juice is the number-one

culprit because we often think it's the healthy thing for kids, but it's not. To be honest, the sugar in something like red cordial is nothing compared to fruit juice. Sure, fruit juice has vitamins but in terms of sugar content, cordial has less sugar than fruit juice. Watch out for anything with dried fruit in it as well, such as a box of sultanas and even some of the so-called healthier cereals, such as muesli. Muesli bars and things like that are also full of sugar.

**There's been a focus on low-fat foods. Should we be aware of low-sugar foods too?**

I don't think that we should be cutting fat out of our children's diet. That's a really big part of wellness and when you cut out fat, manufacturers make up for the loss of texture and flavour by putting lots of sugar back in. A standard full-fat yoghurt is fantastic stuff and doesn't have any added sugar, but when

you're talking about a low-fat unflavoured yoghurt, it could have six teaspoons of sugar in an individual portion. That's double the daily amount the American Heart Association and the World Health Organisation's recommendation for children, in one small serve of yoghurt!

### What are some of the health benefits you can expect to see after cutting back on sugar?

I think it's behaviour – that's the biggest thing. You start to notice more even energy levels from your kids throughout the day. They're not having these hysterical spikes and slumps. I've heard so many anecdotes from parents saying that even simple things like getting their kids to go to bed is easier. Children are eating more sugar than we are, so when you cut that out, they have a chance of being normal and behaving well.



### Sarah's tips

- 1 Try not to stigmatise sugar – rather than 'ban' it, just don't have it in the house.
- 2 Take your kids to do the grocery shopping and have them help you find the best sugar-free, nutrient-dense options.
- 3 Get children involved in the cooking or the growing – get them fired up about good food!

### SPICED PUMPKIN GRANOLA BARS

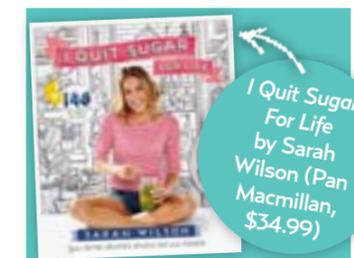
MAKES 16

- 2 cups mixed almonds, cashews, pecans, walnuts and pepitas, roughly chopped
- 2 cups rolled oats
- 2 cups coconut flakes
- 6 tbsps coconut oil (or butter, or a mixture of both)
- ¾ cup rice malt syrup
- 1 cup pumpkin puree (see tip)
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp ground cloves (optional)
- 5 tbsps seeds

1 Preheat oven to 160C and line a 20cm square baking tin with baking paper. In a large bowl, mix together nuts, oats and coconut flakes. In a saucepan, melt oil or butter, syrup, pumpkin puree and spices. Add chia seeds and bring mixture to a gentle boil. Remove from heat and stir through nut and oat mixture until well combined, then continue mixing for another minute to help the ingredients bind. Press mixture evenly into the prepared tin and

bake for 30 to 40 minutes, or until golden. Remove from oven and allow to cool before slicing into bars. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place for 1 to 2 weeks.

**TIP** To make pumpkin puree, preheat oven to 175C. Scoop out and discard seeds and pulp from 1 large pumpkin. Put pumpkin wedges on a baking tray, then rub with 2 tbsps of olive oil and pinch of salt. Bake on the middle oven rack for about 1 hour, or until tender. Scoop out flesh and puree using a stick blender or mash well by hand.



### CHOC MINT SLICE

MAKES 25

#### BASE

- 2¼ cups almond meal
- ⅓ cup raw cacao powder
- ¼ cup arrowroot
- 2 tsps baking powder
- 3 eggs
- ⅓ cup rice malt syrup
- ¼ cup water

#### MINT FILLING

- 3 cups shredded coconut
- 2 tbsps boiling water
- 1 tblsp peppermint extract
- ½ cup coconut oil, melted

#### GANACHE TOPPING

- ½ cup cream
- 100g dark (85 per cent cacao) chocolate, roughly chopped

1 To make base, preheat oven to 180C and line a 20cm square baking tin with baking paper. Combine almond meal, cacao, arrowroot and baking powder in a bowl. Whisk together eggs, syrup and water, pour into dry ingredients and mix well. Pour into prepared tin and bake for 20 minutes, or until cooked. Set aside to cool completely on a wire rack.

2 To make mint filling, pulse

shredded coconut with boiling water and peppermint extract in a food processor until mixture resembles breadcrumbs. Add coconut oil and continue to pulse until combined. Press mixture onto the cooled base and refrigerate for about 30 minutes, or freeze for about 10 minutes, to set.

3 To make ganache topping, bring

cream to a simmer in a small saucepan. Remove from heat and add chopped chocolate, whisking well until all chocolate is melted. Set aside to cool and thicken slightly. When ganache has cooled, you may need to whisk it again briefly before pouring it over the mint filling. Return to fridge until set. Cut into squares before serving.

