

HEALTH & WELLNESS

SUGAR: NOT SO SWEET

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NUTRITION NEWS

Health & Wellness Series

Sugar

References:

American Heart Association:
http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/Sugars-101_UCM_306024_Article.jsp

WebMD: Health Effect of Sugar
<http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/health-effects-of-sugar?page=3>

The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition
<http://www.ajcn.org/cgi/content/full/86/4/899>

When reading ingredient lists, look for the following to identify added sugars:

- Brown Sugar
- Corn Sweetener
- Corn Syrup

- "ose"- dextrose, fructose, glucose, maltose, sucrose

- High fructose corn syrup
- Honey

- Invert sugar
- Malt sugar
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- sugar

Soft drinks are the #1 contributor to excessive sugar intake.



Not all sugar is created equal...

Good Sugars: Naturally occurring

As mentioned in a previous quick drill, sugars and starches provide fuel for our bodies. Naturally occurring sugars are found in fruit and milk products. Eating a diet rich in these foods along with vegetables and whole grain will supply your body with all the sugar it needs for daily functioning.

Bad Sugars: Added sugars during food preparation and process

Sugars improve the taste of food- this is the only reason it is added at all. There is absolutely no nutritive benefit attached to *added sugar*...only empty calories.

What are the effects of excessive sugar consumption?

1. The taste of sugary sweet foods cause our brain to release "feel good" chemicals- only prompting us *to crave and eat more sweets*.
2. Excess intake of sugar's empty calories leads to obesity, which *raises our risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain cancers*.
3. Excessive intake of sugar causes our body to excrete calcium through urine. This drop in blood calcium levels eventually causes our bodies to extract extra calcium from our bones...leading eventually to *osteoporosis, arthritis, bursitis and gout*.
4. Excessive intake has been associated with *elevated triglyceride levels and decreased HDL (good) cholesterol*.
5. Sugar causes red blood cells to "clump" together, making the blood very thick and sticky. This causes more "friction loss" as the blood flows, making it *difficult for the body to absorb oxygen from blood and release carbon dioxide*.
6. Sugar can interfere with our immune system by competing with Vitamin C for transport into white blood cells, *opening the door to infection and illness*.
7. Sugar mixes with chemicals in saliva to form an acid that *erodes tooth enamel and promotes tooth decay*.

So how much is too much?

The American Heart Association recommends **6 teaspoons** (30 grams) per day for women and **9 teaspoons** (45 grams) per day for men of ADDED sugar. These recommendations do not restrict naturally occurring sugar sources as found in fruit and milk products.

How do I know if a food has added sugar?

Unfortunately on today's nutritional labels, it is very difficult to differentiate between the presence of added sugars and naturally occurring sugars. The best way to determine if a food has added sugars is to read the ingredients list. Ingredients are listed by order of prevalence in food. Therefore, if you have an ingredients list where sugar or some form of sugar (see side bar) is among the first five listed ingredients, you will know that product contains a significant amount of *added sugar*.

Tips for consuming less sugar:

Most importantly, don't try to quit your "sugar habit" cold turkey. You will have more success if you slowly wean yourself off of the sweet stuff.

- When baking, cut the amount of sugar called for by one-third to one-half.
- Cut back gradually on adding sugar to items such as coffee, pancakes (syrup), cereal and tea.
- Avoid canned fruit that says "canned in syrup" or "canned in heavy syrup".
- Instead of adding sugar to cereal or oatmeal, try adding fresh or dried fruit.
- Substitute unsweetened applesauce for sugar in recipes. (use a 1:1 ratio)
- Aim for consuming no more than 36 ounces of soft drinks per week.