

So Sweet it Hurts....

Sugar is sweet, and candy is nice, but even a little can turn into a vice

Sugar is no longer an ingredient reserved for the sweet foods we know and love it has now found itself as an ingredient in the majority of the packaged and processed foods found throughout the grocery store. Slowly over the years, food manufacturers have added sugar to our foods to improve taste, texture, mouthfeel, and overall pleasure of the foods we eat. Now as our culture has caught on to the health effects of consuming too much sugar, the manufacturers have also changed the name of the sugars added to their foods to hide them a little better from us. If the ingredient list includes any of the following words or phrases, it means added sugar:

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| ● agave juice | ● confectioners sugar | ● flo malt | ● high fructose corn syrup | ● malt sweetener | ● starch sweetener |
| ● agave nectar | ● corn glucose syrup | ● fructose | ● honey | ● malt syrup | ● sucanat |
| ● agave sap | ● corn sweet | ● fructose sweetener | ● honi bake | ● maltose | ● sucrose |
| ● agave syrup | ● corn sweetener | ● glaze and icing sugar | ● honi flake | ● maple | ● sucrovert |
| ● beet sugar | ● corn syrup | ● glaze icing sugar | ● invert sugar | ● maple sugar | ● sugar beet |
| ● brown rice syrup | ● date sugar | ● golden syrup | ● inverted sugar | ● maple syrup | ● sugar invert |
| ● brown sugar | ● dextrose | ● gomme | ● isoglucose | ● mizu ame | ● sweet n neat |
| ● cane juice | ● drimol | ● granular sweetener | ● isomaltulose | ● molasses | ● table sugar |
| ● cane sugar | ● dri mol | ● granulated sugar | ● kona ame | ● nulomoline | ● treacle |
| ● cane syrup | ● dri sweet | ● hi-fructose corn syrup | ● lactose | ● powdered sugar | ● trehalose |
| ● clintose | ● dried raisin sweetener | | ● liquid sweetener | ● rice syrup | ● tru sweet |
| ● confectioners powdered sugar | ● edible lactose | | ● malt | ● sorghum | ● turbinado sugar |
| | | | | ● sorghum syrup | ● versatose |

It is recommended that less than 10% of our calories should come from sugar in our diet. For example, if a person needs 1500 calories per day, their total sugar intake should be less than 40 grams daily. Let's take this one step further and break it down throughout the day - Each meal should have less than 13 grams sugar.

With that in mind, an average "healthy" breakfast cereal like a pouch of instant oatmeal has an average of 11 grams sugar, or Raisin Bran has 9 grams of sugar per 1 cup serving. While most would think a bad cereal would be a kids' sugary cereal such as Lucky Charms; this one only has an additional 3 grams of sugar per 1 cup serving, making it 12 grams of sugar. Adding an 8 ounce glass of orange juice to this breakfast would add 22 more grams of sugar.

Although a couple slices of bread for a sandwich at lunch may only set you back by a couple grams of sugar, the other sides can add up quickly. A pack of sandwich crackers can add an additional 3 grams sugar, a container of activia yogurt with 8 more grams of sugar, and if we want to indulge in the snack cake to relive our childhood, a Little Debbie Oatmeal crème pie has another 13 grams. Don't ask about the little twinkie... it has 31 grams!

This certainly does not account for the healthier sources of sugar in our diet such as fruit and higher protein dairy. The sugar in these foods should be outweighed by the fiber or protein content. Fiber is a vital asset to the diet for multiple reasons. Fiber provides the sensation of feeling full because it provides volume to our foods. It also helps to regulate the speed of digestion, ultimately helping us to feel fuller longer after meals. Fiber most importantly keeps the digestive tract healthy. The gut microbiota feeds on fiber to keep our immune systems strong, to produce and provide vital nutrients, and in turn aid in the balance of keeping hormones balanced in the body to help in prevention of depression. You heard that right, eating more fruits, whole grains, and vegetables for fiber helps to fight depression.

Many are concerned to include fruits in the diet for the sugar content but you actually get a higher volume of food for less calories when choosing fruit over other added sugar foods. For example, a 3.5 ounce apple (which is about the size of a baseball, not softball) would have 12 grams of sugar but also 2 grams of fiber and only 85 calories. When comparing to the 1 cup of Lucky Charms, for the same 12 grams of sugar, one would also get 140 calories. This does not consider the added milk, and also hopes that the portion size would be measured.

Protein is also an important component of food that helps us to feel fuller longer. It is necessary to keep our immune system strong and to help with rebuilding and maintaining muscle mass. A common dairy food faulted for its sugar content is yogurt, but there are certainly better yogurt options than others. A regular yogurt will often have an inadequate 5 grams of protein and 13 grams of sugar per serving. While a Greek yogurt will have an average of 12-15 grams of protein with 9 grams of added sugar. Some Greek yogurts have even less added sugar. This higher protein amount helps to food to be better satisfying longer, while also providing your body with important building blocks to keep you healthy.

While these are very simple examples of a bigger picture, these are good stepping stones to consider as one transitions to healthier choices that move away from the higher amounts of sugar in many commonly eaten foods. It can seem like an overwhelming and impossible task to eliminate sugar completely from the diet and this is why it's important to focus on simple changes. For example, looking at a few different food labels to choose the lower sugar alternative, may be a good first step. Another option may be to start to measure the portion to the recommended amount on the packaging. Others may take a bigger step and choose to cut certain foods completely from their diet.

If you're having trouble figuring out the right steps for you, we're happy to help! Stop to set up an appointment with our Registered Dietitian to discuss your questions and concerns in greater detail and design a plan specific to your needs.

Let Food Be Thy Medicine - Hippocrates

