

Eating Less Sugar for Better Health

We know that eating too much sugar can cause or contribute to a lot of health problems, such as diabetes, obesity, elevated blood pressure, certain types of cancers, stroke, gallbladder and liver disorders, respiratory problems, and more.

The first thing to do is to track how much sugar you are taking in each day. This involves a little detective work, since sugars often masquerade as other words in the ingredients list. These "disguised" sugars may be listed as "anhydrous dextrose, brown sugar, cane crystals, cane sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, crystal dextrose, evaporated cane juice, fructose sweetener, fruit juice concentrates, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, liquid fructose, malt syrup, maple syrup, molasses, pancake syrup, raw sugar, sugar, syrup and white sugar. Other types of sugar you might commonly see on ingredient lists are fructose, lactose and maltose. Fructose is sugar derived from fruit and vegetables; lactose is milk sugar; and maltose is sugar that comes from grain." (<http://healthyeating.sfgate.com>).

But wait - there are many more! The Food Label Movement cites these examples too: "Some of the less apparent sugar names include carbitol, concentrated fruit juice, corn sweetener, diglycerides, disaccharides, evaporated cane juice, erythritol, Florida crystals, fructooligosaccharides, galactose, glucitol, glucoamine, hexitol, inversol, isomalt, maltodextrin, malted barley, malts, mannitol, nectars, pentose, raisin syrup, ribose rice syrup, rice malt, rice syrup solids, sorbitol, sorghum, sucanat, sucamet, xylitol and zylose." (<http://healthyeating.sfgate.com>).

What is the goal for sugar consumption? Unfortunately, in Canada, we have murky and outdated guidelines for this. But the World Health Organization advises us to keep our sugar intake to between 5% and 10% of our daily calories. Read more here.

It isn't always possible to count up the grams of sugar(s) in the food you are eating, but keep in mind that the ingredients are listed by weight from more to less of that ingredient. So if you see several of these sugar types in the ingredients list, better look for a healthier choice.

Some tips for choosing lower sugar foods:

1. Pick veggies over fruits or bread-based snacks. Vegetables have naturally low sugar content.
2. Choose fruits with lower sugar content and keep fruit intake lower than vegetable intake. For a comprehensive list of sugar content of fruits and vegetables, click here.
3. Take in more high quality protein, whether it is meat- or plant based. Protein fills you up and keeps you satisfied for up to three times as long as a sugary snack does.
4. If the very thought of cutting your sugar intake causes you stress, relax. Cut it daily by a little bit - say 10-15 grams - until your cravings have lessened and you are tracking the

guidelines above.

5. When you just have to have something sweet - plan for it. What the treat will be, when you will eat it, and predetermine the portion size. If you are having a cookie or brownie, for example, keep the rest of them wrapped singly in the freezer, to lessen the temptation to eat more than the single serving.

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