

Sugar-Coating the Truth

It's a well-known fact that sugar is bad for your health, but to what extent? To answer this, you need to know that there's more than one type of sugar. Glucose, the 'good' sugar, is needed for the circulation of the blood, as well as the secretion of insulin. Fructose on the other hand is the 'bad sugar', and can only be metabolized by the liver. Once the liver has too much fructose to handle, it is turned into fat rather than energy, and nobody wants that!

Sucrose is found naturally in almost all food items, and is broken down into the two sugars. This is why it's a problem that companies add extra sugar to their products; there are already natural sugars in them! This is an even bigger issue when the ingredients already had high sugar-contents to begin with. The worst culprits are companies which produce juice or canned pasta sauce, since fruits tend to be high in sugar content. In fact, most fruit juices actually have more sugar in them than the same amount of a soft drink like Coca Cola would!



Fruit juices are often wrongfully assumed to be healthy, but in actuality they're missing out on all of the things that make actual fruits good for you. They have no fiber content, are filled with artificial sugars, and are high in calories!



Sugar has been blamed on many health problems, including, though not limited to: childhood obesity, tooth decay, heart problems, type 2 diabetes, and even cancer!

Since the 1980's, obesity rates in Canada have roughly doubled. More than 25% of the adult population is considered obese and over 65% are overweight. In the U.S. 35.7% of American adults are considered obese, and 17% of the American children. These figures are taken from a study done in 2010, by CDC.

Added sugar is one of the worst things for you, but be wary of products which label themselves 'low sugar' or 'sugar-free' as well. 'Low sugar' is a claim which isn't currently regulated by the FDA, and therefore could mean literally anything! 'Sugar-free' is a term that is regulated, but generally means that there is a sugar substitute instead.



Common sugar substitutes include: acesulfame potassium, agave nectar, aspartame, high-fructose corn syrup, neotame, stevia leaf extract, honey, saccharin, sucralose, and sugar alcohols. Of these, the most dangerous ones are listed to the right.

To reduce the amount of sugar you eat daily, here are some quick tips:

- Do you have a problem with cutting down on sweetened products? Learn the half-and-half trick! You start by buying both a sweetened and unsweetened version of a product (apple sauce, for example). Next time you use the product, cut in half of the unsweetened version with the regular version. Every time you use it start adding more and more, until you're finally used to the difference in sugar.
- Stop adding extra sugar to recipes which don't need it. This especially counts for things like sauces, casseroles, or soups.
- Stop buying sports drinks! They may be high in electrolytes, but they're one of the worst things you can have if you're trying to cut back on your sugar intake.
- Buy low-sugar cereals. Most cereal brands are chocked full of added sugars, and even the healthier-looking ones can be bad for you. Check the label to make sure there's less than 8 grams of sugar per serving.

High-Fructose Corn Syrup- This is probably one of the more commonly used sugar substitutes in America and Canada. High-fructose corn syrup differs from regular corn syrup in that regular corn syrup is 100% glucose, where as the high-fructose kind has had had some of its molecules enzymatically changed into fructose. It's extremely unhealthy and has been linked with the rise of obesity in North America.

Saccharin- This is a sweetener about 300 times sweeter than sugar, with virtually no energy content. It's been known to cause cancer in various animals and is banned in India and a few other Asian nations.

Aspartame- This has been blamed for everything from headaches to cancer, with more tests done on it than any other popular substitute. When digested, it turns into methanol in the body. It's used most commonly in diet pops and bubblegum.

Neotame- This is an artificial sweetener based off the formula for aspartame, and is manufactured by NutraSweet. It's been referred to as "aspartame on steroids" and causes many of the same problems including: dizziness, confusion, severe depression, anxiety, nausea, abdominal pain, and even vision damage in higher doses.

Cyclamate- This is less popular than the other items on the list, since it's banned for use in food products in Canada. It is sold under the brand name Sweet N' Low, and is a known carcinogen.
