

HEALTH IN OUR HANDS!

The Arkansas State University Wellness Program Newsletter
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Sugar: The Bitter Truth

Introduction

The month of October brings a few things to mind: fall colors, cooler weather, and sugar! With Halloween right around the corner, it is easy to over indulge on our favorite sweet treats. Sugar is sweet, but its effects can be very sour. The following provides information regarding sugar, its effects, and helpful tips to control intake.

What is Sugar?

Sugar is a simple carbohydrate found naturally in most plants, particularly sugarcane and sugar beets. Our bodies have two options for sugar: burn it for energy or convert it to fat. Sugar in the diet can be naturally occurring or added. Naturally occurring sugars are found in all natural foods, such as fruits and vegetables. Added sugars are put in foods during processing or added at the table. There are a few different types of sugar that are important to distinguish.

Glucose

Glucose, aka blood sugar, is naturally occurring and the preferred energy source for the body. Our bodies process most carbohydrates into glucose to either be used immediately for energy, or stored in the muscle cells or liver for later use.

Fructose

Fructose is also known as "fruit sugar". This type of sugar is frequently heard of in sodas and fruit juices as "high fructose corn syrup". Fructose is only metabolized in the liver, making it different than glucose. It can be toxic in high amounts because the job of the liver is to get rid of the fructose. This is often done by transforming the sugar into fat, making fructose more fat producing than glucose. Ultimately, overloading the liver with fat can result in non-alcoholic fatty liver disease.

Sucrose

Sucrose is commonly known as "table sugar" and is a combination of glucose and fructose. Sucrose is the main

ingredient in many baked goods and processed foods.

Sugar Breakdown

After we consume sugar, the pancreas releases insulin to deal with the excess sugar. Insulin helps regulate our blood sugar levels. The more sugar we have, the more insulin is released.

Sometimes our bodies have a hard time keeping up with that balance, so we release too much insulin causing our blood sugars to drop below normal. This is what we know as a "sugar crash". So how do our bodies respond? We want more sugar and the cycle continues!

Sugar Facts

Added sugars are empty calories, meaning that they hold no nutritional value. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans suggest limiting added sugar intake to less than 10% of overall calorie intake. The American Heart Association recommends women consume no more

than 24 grams of added sugar per day and that men consume no more than 36 grams.

- The average American consumes about 82 grams of sugar every day.
 - That is 66 pounds of added sugar consumed each year, per person.
 - Halloween alone accounts for two of those pounds.

Effects of Sugar

The average American consumes well over the recommended daily amount of added sugar, but how bad is sugar really? The following is a list of a few of the harmful effects of excess sugar.

- Weight gain
- Liver damage
- Brain fog
- Aging skin
- Sugar addiction
- Increased risk for heart disease
- Increased risk for diabetes
- Tooth decay
- Increased stress
- Nutrient deficiency

Tips to Reduce Intake

- Be aware
 - We often don't think about the sugar in our beverages.
 - The average can of soda contains 40 grams of sugar.
 - Many foods contain hidden sugars and

most processed foods contain added sugar, even if the food isn't sweet.

- Low fat foods often use sugar to enhance their flavor.
- Read food labels
 - The following are alternate names for "sugar" on a food label.
 - Glucose
 - Fructose
 - Sucrose
 - Lactose
 - Maltose
 - Dextrose
 - High fructose corn syrup
 - Corn sweetener
 - Fruit juice concentrate
 - Molasses
 - Malt syrup
 - Honey
 - Evaporated cane juice
 - Cane crystals
 - Brown sugar
- Limit intake of refined carbohydrates (cereal, waffles, grains)
- Enhance foods with spices instead of sugar
 - Cinnamon
 - Ginger
 - Nutmeg
- Use extracts instead of sugar
 - Almond extract
 - Vanilla extract
 - Lemon extract
- Remove added sugars from your home to reduce temptation
 - Table sugar
 - Brown sugar

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Other News:

**If you have any suggestions for newsletter topics, please contact Dean Susan Hanrahan at hanrahan@astate.edu.

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The Arkansas State University Employee Wellness Newsletter is published monthly during the academic year by the College of Nursing and Health Professions. Health questions can be addressed to Dean Susan Hanrahan, Ph.D., ext. 3112 or hanrahan@astate.edu. Produced by Jordan Hood, graduate student in the College of Nursing and Health Professions, Physical Therapy Program.