**Day 15 Sugar**

**Title: Sugar here! Sugar there! Sugar, sugar, everywhere!**

Here in the United States, the average adult consumes 76.9 grams of sugar each day. Since it can be difficult to picture what a gram looks like, picture this instead: 4 grams is equal to 1 teaspoon. That means adults in the United States get 19 teaspoons of sugar per day. This works out to roughly 61 pounds of sugar per year. Is that a good thing or a bad thing? What does all that sugar do to our bodies?

**All that sugar does what?**

Each gram of sugar has 4 calories. That means 1 teaspoon has 16 calories. And the 19 teaspoons we eat every day brings along a whopping 304 calories, but little to no nutritional value. Over the course of one year, eating 304 extra calories each day can lead to a weight gain of almost 32 pounds. Consuming a lot of sugar doesn’t just add inches to our waistlines. Researchers have examined how the sugar we eat affects our health. They have found that consuming sugar in excess increases our risk for obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease.

**Added sugar vs. naturally occurring sugar**

Many health and medical associations, such as the World Health Organization and the American Heart Association, have recommended that we all cut back on how much sugar we get. Their focus is on added sugar. Added sugars are the types of sugars that are not found naturally in foods. These include sugars, syrups, and other sweeteners that are added to foods, or are found in fruit juices. Even sweeteners that we may think of as “natural,” such as honey, molasses, cane sugar, and agave are still added sugar.

Sugar found naturally in fruits, vegetables, and dairy products are considered “naturally occurring sugar.” Researchers have not found a link between health problems and the sugar that occurs naturally in these foods. They do recommend limiting fruit juice, since it does not have the fiber content of the original fruit.

**How much sugar is too much?**

Ideally, we should get no more than 5% of our daily calories from added sugar. This is roughly 6 teaspoons per day for women and 9 teaspoons per day for men. Cutting down from 19 teaspoons per day to 6 or 9 will take a little work, but it can be done.

**How can I find these added sugars?**

In the United States, food labels list the total amount of sugar in a serving. Some of this is naturally occurring sugar and some is added sugar. Naturally occurring sugars are the fructose in fruit and vegetables or lactose in dairy products.

For example, dairy products contain lactose. Because this sugar is present naturally in milk, you would expect to see a few grams of sugar per serving on the food label for milk. But let’s say you’re craving chocolate milk. There are also a few grams of sugar on the chocolate milk food label, but in this case, there are added sugars, as well. Once you look down at the ingredients list, you’ll notice that some sort of sugar has been added to your chocolate milk. The higher up on the list, the more sugar there is.

Not all added sugars are called “sugar,” though. There are dozens of different types of sugar or other sweeteners added to foods these days. If you don’t want to memorize all of these different names, there are a few shortcuts you can learn. Generally, sugars and sweeteners tend to have the following words in their names:

* sugar (e.g., cane sugar, beet sugar, brown sugar, invert sugar)
* syrup (e.g., maple syrup, corn syrup, buttered syrup, high fructose corn syrup)
* words that end in “-ose” (e.g., dextrose, glucose, maltose, fructose, sucrose)
* words that include “sweetener” (e.g., corn sweetener)
* fruit juice
* molasses
* caramel
* honey

**A final word**

Sugary foods and beverages give us a lot of calories and little to no nutrition. And they often take the place of other food and beverage options that could be lower in calories, higher in nutrition, or both. You don’t have to cut out all sugar from your diet, but chances are you’re eating more sugar than you realize, and more than what’s healthy. Keep an eye out for hidden sugars in your foods. If you’re craving something sweet, reach for fruit, which has plenty of sugar, but also fiber to make the sugar go easier on your body and your health.

**Sources:**

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