

Understanding Natural vs. Added Sugars

Sugar occurs naturally in all foods that contain carbohydrates, such as fruits and vegetables, grains, and dairy. Plant foods have natural sugar, but also high amounts of fiber, essential minerals, and antioxidants, and dairy foods contain protein and calcium. Health issues may occur when you consume too much **added sugar**. **Added sugars provide little nutritional benefit and excess calories.**

Added sugars are sugars that food manufacturers add to products to increase flavor or extend shelf life. Sugar is added to countless food products and can go by many names, including sucrose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, high fructose corn syrup, cane syrup, concentrated fruit juice, agave nectar and honey. Unless you consume only whole, unprocessed foods, you are bound to have added sugars in your daily diet. **Added sugars have been linked to health concerns including overweight and obesity, type 2 diabetes, prediabetes, inflammation, and cardiovascular disease.**

Added sugars make up at least 10% of the calories the average American eats in a day. Federal guidelines offer specific limits for the amount of salt and fat we eat but there aren't similar upper limits for added sugar. However, The American Heart Association advises limiting added sugars daily to no more than:

Men — 9 teaspoons / 36 grams / 150 calories OR LESS

Women and kids ages 2+ — 6 teaspoons / 25 grams / 100 calories OR LESS

(children under 2 should not consume any added sugars)

To put these numbers in perspective, one regular can of soda contains 10 teaspoons of sugar!

Common Sources of Added Sugars Include

Sugar-sweetened beverages: Regular soda – Energy/Sports drinks – Sweetened tea/coffee drinks – Juice drinks (unless they are 100% juice) – Flavored sweetened waters – Any other beverage with added sugars

Sugar-sweetened beverages contribute about **HALF of the total added sugar in the U.S. food supply. The source of the sweetness in most products is high-fructose corn syrup.*

Sweets and Desserts: Candy – Brownies – Cakes – Cupcakes – Pies – Cookies – Pastries – Doughnuts – Pudding – Ice Cream – Frozen Yogurt or other frozen desserts

Sweetened Breakfast Foods: Breakfast cereals – Oatmeal – Breakfast shakes – Cereal bars – Granola bars

Condiments: Ketchup – Relish – Barbeque Sauce – Salad dressings – Honey Mustard – Some Salsas

Habits to Avoid Added Sugars

- Always check nutrition facts label and ingredients.
- Limit sugary drinks and foods.
- Avoid processed and convenience foods.
- Replace candy and desserts with naturally sweet fruit.
- Make meals at home without adding sugars.