
Added Sugars; Healthy Eating Tips

Sugars are a type of carbohydrate found in food, including drinks. They provide your body with glucose, which is the body's main source of energy.

Sugars can occur naturally in food or are added to food to make it taste sweeter, change texture and colour, and to preserve it.

- Natural sugars are found in fruit, some vegetables, milk and unsweetened milk products like yogurt.
- Added sugars are found in most processed foods like pop; sweetened coffee, tea, breakfast cereals and fruit drinks; baked goods; flavoured yogurt; condiments and sauces. Sugar can also be added to foods that have natural sugars, such as applesauce.

Your body uses natural and added sugars in the same way. However, compared to foods with added sugars, foods with natural sugars have more healthy nutrients like fibre, vitamins and minerals. Foods with added sugars are often low in nutrients but high in calories. For example, a can of pop contains about 10 teaspoons of added sugars, which is equal to about 160 calories, and no other nutrients your body needs.

Health Canada and other health organizations around the world recommend limiting foods and drinks that are high in added sugars. Choosing foods that are low in added sugars will help in the prevention and management of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, some cancers, dental cavities, gout and lead to an overall healthier diet.

This handout provides tips on how you can reduce added sugars in your diet and choose healthier options.



Steps you can take

1. Choose minimally processed foods. These foods do not contain added sugars:

- vegetables and fruits
- unsweetened whole grain products like whole grain bread, pasta and breakfast cereals.
- unsweetened, lower fat milk and milk products (skim, 1%, 2%)
- lean meats, poultry, fish and tofu without pre-made sauce or marinade
- plain nuts and seeds
- legumes, like dried beans, peas and lentils.

Vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds and legumes contain fibre, which can help you feel full and less likely to overeat.

2. Read food labels to help you choose foods with less added sugars.

Check the ingredient list to see if any sugars have been added. If the following sugars are listed as one of the first few ingredients on a food package, the food is likely high in added sugars:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• agave• brown sugar• cane juice• corn syrup• demerara• dextrose or dextrin• fructose (fruit sugar)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• icing sugar• invert sugar• liquid sugar• maltodextrin• maltose• malt syrup• maple syrup• molasses
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fruit juice or concentrate • galactose • glucose • glucose-fructose • high fructose corn syrup • honey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nectar • raw sugar • sucrose • treacle • white sugar.
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Added sugars like honey, maple syrup and agave may be considered more 'natural', but they are not healthier than other types of added sugars and contain about the same amount of calories.

Use the Nutrition Facts table to help you choose a product that is low in total sugar. Look under "Carbohydrates" and find the amount of sugar (in grams) in one serving of the food. This value includes both natural and added sugars. Compare products and choose the one with less sugar. Make sure the servings sizes of the foods you're comparing are the same. See Additional Resources for more information about reading labels.

3. Use the nutrient claims on food labels to help you choose foods lower in added sugars.

- Manufacturers use nutrient claims to advertise their products. Here is what they mean:

Nutrient Claim	Meaning
Reduced Sugar ("Sugar-Reduced", "Less Sugar", "Lower sugar")	Contains at least 25% and at least 5 grams less sugar per serving than the regular version of the food.
No Added Sugar ("No Sugar Added", "Without Added Sugar")	Contains no added sugars or sugar-containing ingredients. They may still contain natural sugars.
Unsweetened	Contains no added sugars, sugar-

	containing ingredients, or artificial sweetener. They may still contain natural sugars.
Sugar-free ("Free of Sugar", "No Sugar", "Zero Sugar", "Without Sugar", "Contains No Sugar", "Sugarless")	Contains less than 0.5 grams of sugar and less than 5 calories per serving.

TIP: Choose foods and drinks that contain no added sugars or are unsweetened.

4. Reduce the amount of added sugars in your diet one step at a time.

Check out these suggestions:

<i>Instead of this...</i>	<i>...Try this</i>
Flavoured lattes and specialty coffee or tea drinks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drinks flavoured with sugar-free flavourings such as almond or vanilla extract or cinnamon. • Unsweetened coffee, regular or herbal tea, with or without milk. If you add sugar, try using less over time or switch to a sugar substitute.
Fruit cocktails, nectars, punches and "drinks" (i.e. lemonade)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100% fruit juice; limit to 125 mL (½ cup) a day • Reduced-sugar versions of fruit juice • A fruit juice and mineral water spritzer
Sweetened cereal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole grain cereal with no added sugars • Sweetened cereal mixed with whole grain cereal with no added sugars.

Sweetened instant oatmeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oatmeal with fruit, chopped nuts, or cinnamon.
Fruit canned in syrup, fruit snacks or fruit leather	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh fruit • Unsweetened frozen fruit • 60 mL (¼ cup) of dried fruit with no added sugars (e.g. raisins, apricots, prunes, figs, dates, peaches, apples, pears) • Fruit canned in water or juice.
Sweet and salty snacks like caramel corn or a granola bar or chocolate trail mix	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain popcorn with added garlic or chilli powder • Homemade trail mix without added chocolate or candies • Handful (60mL (¼ cup) of plain nuts and seeds.
Pre-packaged sauces and condiments (e.g. stir-fry sauce, ketchup, salad dressings, marinades)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homemade sauces (e.g. stir-fry sauce, salad dressings, marinades) made with less added sugars or sugary items. • Reduced sugar versions of the pre-packaged sauce.
Cookies, pudding, cake, sweetened breads and donuts with icing or glaze, specialty ice cream or brownies and fudge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split your dessert with someone else. • Measure out a smaller portion of dessert and add some fruit. • Make the dessert yourself and use 25% less sugar.

Chocolate/flavoured milk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mix chocolate milk with low-fat milk (skim or 1%). Use less powder or syrup when making at home.
Pop or an energy drink	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water with sliced berries or citrus slices for flavour. • Carbonated water mixed with a little juice or fruit slices. • Low-fat milk.
Sweetened or fruit flavoured yogurt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plain low-fat yogurt with added fruit or frozen fruit • Homemade yogurt smoothie with fruit.

TIP: When an unsweetened or low-sugar option is unavailable, have a small serving of the food with a high amount of added sugars.

Special Considerations

You may consider sugar substitutes like aspartame, sucralose, or steviol as a way of eating less added sugars. Although sugar substitutes are one way to decrease added sugars, not all foods that are sweetened with sugar substitutes are healthy or low in calories. It is also important to consider how these foods fit into a healthy diet.



Additional Resources

- Recipe 'Make-over': Tips for Healthier Cooking <http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8PpUQY=&PreviewHandout=bA== >
- Recipe 'Make-over': Tips for Healthier Baking <http://www.pennutrition.com/viewhandout.aspx?Portal=UbY=&id=J8PpXq0=&PreviewHandout=bA== >
- Sugars and Sweeteners: <http://guidelines.diabetes.ca/docs/patient-resources/sugars-and-sweeteners.pdf>

These resources are provided as sources of additional information believed to be reliable and accurate at the time of publication and should not be considered an endorsement of any information, service, product or company.



Notes

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