

Tips for reducing your family's intake of added sugars

Eating meals, beverages and snacks with fewer sources of added sugar can result in less obesity, lower rates of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some types of cancer in adults. There is also evidence that consuming less sugars can be linked to less dental problems such as cavities.

Reducing added sugars is a priority for many families. It is a goal, that is not always easy as just trading cookies for fruit. Added sugars can be found in many foods where you may not expect it.

According to the U.S.D.A. Dietary Guidelines for Americans added sugars include syrups, and other caloric sweeteners. Added sugars sweeten a food and although they add calories, they do not add hardly any nutrition.

On an ingredient label, sugar may appear under many names. Some common ones including cane sugar, evaporated can juice, corn syrup, high-fructose corn syrup, raw sugar, and crystal solids. Also, it can be listed as brown sugar, honey, maple syrup and brown rice syrup.

The Dietary Guidelines recommends limiting sugar to less than 10 percent of your daily calorie needs. That is about 12 teaspoons or 48 grams of sugar on a 2,000 calorie, diet. For small children who only need 1200 to 1400 calories per day, it is even less. For them they need no more than 7 to 8 teaspoons or 30 to 35 grams of sugar.

Rather than being concerned about grams and teaspoons of sugar, look at ways that you can reduce sugar by limiting the products that contain added sugars. Some common sources include sugar sweetened beverages including sodas, fruit punch, energy drinks and some coffees and teas; cereals, candy, chocolates, yogurt, and baked goods including pies, breads, cakes, and cookies.

Here are some tips for reducing added sugars:

1. Look for hidden sugars in whole grain cereals, granola, instant oatmeal, frozen foods, sauces, dried and canned fruit, baby food, sauces, and other condiments.
2. At the grocery store, look at the list of ingredients and Nutrition Facts Labels. Select foods that do not use sugars.
3. Try naturally sweetened fruits and vegetables as options when baking and cooking. Examples including bananas, sweet potatoes, and apples.
4. Rather than choosing sweetened cereals and yogurts, choose unsweetened and add berries, and other fruits.
5. Choose beverages that have no sugar including water, coffee, tea, and milk.
6. Limit flavored milks, caffeinated beverages and low-calorie beverages that have added sugar and especially for young children
7. Add fruit and fresh herbs, like lemon slices or mint leaves to water
8. You can reduce sugar in baked and home cooked foods.
9. Make your own granola, pasta sauces and condiments that do not have added sugars.
10. Add flavorings such as vanilla and cinnamon to foods and beverages to give a sweet taste.

Sugar is a learned flavor so it may take a while to reduce your desire for sugar. As you and your families taste buds adjust, gradually use less and less of the sweetened variety. Also, focus less on going completely sugar free, but focus on quality foods such as fruits and vegetables, fresh tastes, and flavors.

Source: eatright.org