

SUGARCONDRUM

We all hear about the importance of limiting added sugars, but what about naturally occurring sugars in fruits and other foods?

There are many different types of sugars added in the processing of food and beverages to provide flavor, viscosity, texture, color or other desired features of the product. Naturally occurring sugars are found in milk products, fruit and some vegetables. The Nutrition Facts label does not differentiate however between added or naturally occurring sugars in food, and neither do our bodies. Once a sugar is absorbed, the body sees and reacts to all types of sugar as essentially the same.

Since we don't eat sugar by itself, however, we have to compare the foods with naturally occurring sugars to foods containing added sugar; for instance, a banana to a snickers bar or a peach to fruit snacks. Foods that naturally contain sugar also contain other beneficial nutrients, such as protein, calcium and Vitamin D in milk or the vitamins and antioxidants in fruit. It does not make sense to limit these foods to the same extent, if at all, in comparison to limiting processed foods with added sugar.

The major sources of added sugars are beverages and fruit drinks, desserts and candy, none of which is a good source of other nutrients. We also find added sugars in lots of refined carbohydrates, packaged and processed foods such as chips, crackers, pasta, cereals, breads, and yogurts. Remember, your body doesn't need to get any carbohydrates from added sugar. Reducing intake of foods with added sugars removes empty calories and lessens your likelihood of running into greater health problems down the line, such as obesity, diabetes, and heart disease.

HOW TO SPOT ADDED SUGAR?

Spotting added sugar on the food label requires some detective work. Food and beverage manufacturers must list a product's total amount of sugar per serving on the Nutrition Facts label, but they are not required to list how much of that product is added sugar. That's why scanning the ingredients list of food or drink is important, and added sugars go by many different names. All ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, so seeing where the sugar is listed on the label tells you whether the food contains a lot of sugar or just a little bit. A good rule of thumb is to skip products that have added sugar at or near the top of the list -- or have several sources of added sugar strategically placed throughout the list. Be aware of your sugar intake!

OTHER NAMES FOR SUGAR

- Agave nectar
- Brown sugar
- Cane crystals/sugar
- Corn sweetener/syrup
- Crystalline fructose
- Dextrose
- Evaporated cane juice
- Fructose

- Fruit juice concentrates
- Glucose
- High fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Invert sugar
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Malt syrup
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- Sucrose
- Sugar
- Syrup

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