

Eat Right

Food, Nutrition and Health Tips from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics



Eating Right with Less Added Sugars



Sugar is found naturally in some foods and drinks, like fruit and milk, but it is also added to many of them. Sugars added to foods and beverages give them a sweet taste but offer no nutrition compared to foods and drinks that are naturally sweet. Most Americans get too many calories from added sugars and over time this may affect their weight and health.

Many people think of desserts as the main source of added sugars, but numerous foods and drinks may contain added sugars. For example, sweetened drinks like regular soft drinks, some fruit drinks and energy drinks are all sources of added sugars. Snack foods, like crackers, and even ready-to-eat foods, like pizza and pasta sauces, can be made with added sugars. Some people may also add sugar to what they eat and drink, like sprinkling sugar over cereal or pouring flavored creamer in coffee.

How to Identify Sources of Added Sugars

The new and improved Nutrition Facts Label can help you identify sources of added sugars. You can also review the ingredients list. The ingredients that appear first are in the largest amount. Be sure to look for foods and drinks that don't have sugar (or some other sweetener) listed as the first ingredient. Other examples of sweeteners and sources of added sugars include: brown sugar, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, maple syrup, molasses, sucrose, white granulated sugar.

Sources of added sugars often lack nutrients needed for good health, while foods and drinks that contain natural sources of sugar provide nutrients, like vitamins and minerals. For example, fruits like strawberries are a great source of vitamin C, and milk provides vitamins A and D and calcium.

It's not necessary for individuals over the age of 2 to avoid all sources of added sugars. The problem is that many of us include too many sources of added sugars or eat and drink larger amounts than is recommended. When this happens there is less room for more nutritious foods and drinks.

If you have a taste for something sweet, try eating some fruit first. When you're thirsty reach for milk or water. Other ways to reduce sources of added sugars include: making or buying healthier versions of baked goods; including foods and drinks with added sugars less often; and eating or drinking sweet treats in smaller portions.

Tips on How to Reduce Sources of Added Sugars

- Sweeten low-fat plain yogurt with fresh, frozen or canned (in its own juice) fruit in place of fruit-flavored yogurt.
- Add cinnamon and dried fruit to plain cooked oats instead of using instant flavored oatmeal.
- Encourage healthier drinks like plain milk and water for young children.
- Substitute 100% fruit juice for fruit punch and other fruit-flavored drinks for older children.
- Switch from sweetened to unsweetened applesauce.
- Drink plain low-fat milk instead of chocolate milk.
- Use jams and jellies with no sugar added.
- Enjoy a homemade smoothie with frozen fruit, low-fat milk and yogurt in place of ice cream.
- Quench your thirst with water or plain low-fat milk instead of sweetened beverages, like energy, soft and sports drinks.

Include healthier choices from the MyPlate food groups in place of foods and drinks with added sugars to better meet your nutrient needs and limit added sugars to less than 10 percent of calories per day starting at age 2.

Visit www.MyPlate.gov for more information.

For a referral to a registered dietitian nutritionist and for additional food and nutrition information, visit www.eatright.org.

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. The Academy is committed to improving health and advancing the profession of dietetics through research, education and advocacy.

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Sources: Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, health.gov and USDA's MyPlate.gov

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