

12 Healthy Habits

Habit 9: Sugar Down

A YEAR OF BUILDING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

BENEFITS:

- **Helps control weight by reducing empty calories**
- **Helps prevent tooth decay**

GOAL:

- **Reduce the amount of added sugars per day to 6 teaspoons for women and 9 teaspoons for men**

Don't Let Your Sweet Tooth Rule

Sugar—it makes our foods taste good and gives us energy but it also adds calories to our diet without much in the way of nutrients. According to USDA, Americans eat an average of 22 teaspoons of added sugars every day.

Sugars can be naturally occurring, such as lactose in milk or fructose in fruit, or they can be added to foods in forms like refined sugar, high fructose corn syrup or honey. All sugars are treated the same by the body and are broken down into glucose. Glucose is used as an energy source for red blood cells, the brain and central nervous system.

It is the added sugars that are of concern in the diet because they don't provide any nutrients like the calcium in milk or vitamin C in orange juice. These added

sugars are referred to as “empty calories”. For optimal health, we want to get as many nutrients out of our calories as we can by consuming nutrient-dense foods and to balance our calorie intake with what our body uses in order to maintain a healthy weight.

The major sources of added sugars in the U.S. are regular soft drinks and other sweetened beverages, candies, cakes and cookies. Consuming too many calories from these items may contribute to weight gain or result in eating less of the nutrient-dense foods.

Sugars are also hidden in processed foods. Check the food label. On the Nutrition Facts label, sugars is listed with the number of grams. However, this includes both naturally

occurring sugar and added sugar. So look at the ingredient list to see if it has added sugars. The higher on the list or the more types listed, the more sugar the product contains.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than 6 teaspoons for women and 9 teaspoons for men of added sugars per day.

So take a look at how you spend your calories and sugar down to get the most nutrition. Eat high-sugar foods in moderation and choose foods with no added sugar whenever possible.



What's in a Name?

Look for these names of added sugars on the ingredient list on processed foods:

Agave	Maltose
Brown Sugar	Malt Syrup
Corn Sweetener	Nectar
Corn Syrup	Molasses
Dextrose	Raw Sugar
Fructose	Sorghum Syrup
Glucose	Sucrose
Honey	Sugar
Lactose	Syrup

How Much Sugar?

Here are some common high sugar foods with their added sugar content in teaspoons:

Food	Tsp. of Sugar
Carbonated Soda (12 oz.)	8
Canned Peaches in Heavy Syrup (1 cup)	6
Non-Fat Fruit Yogurt (6 oz.)	5
Milk Chocolate Bar (1.55 oz.)	5
Cake Doughnut (1)	5
Angel Food Cake (1 piece)	4
Vanilla Ice Cream (1/2 cup)	3
Chocolate Chip Cookie (1)	1

Sugar Math:

1 teaspoon = 4 grams

1 gram of sugar = 4 calories

1 teaspoon = 16 calories

Avoid a Sugar High

Check out these tips for lowering the amount of sugar you consume:

1. **Think your drink.** Switch the majority of your beverage choices to unsweetened drinks like water or unsweetened tea or coffee.
2. **Portion control.** When you indulge in high sugar desserts or snacks, eat a smaller portion. Try having one scoop of ice cream instead of three.
3. **Read the labels.** Look at the ingredient lists on processed foods to see if there are added sugars in the product.
4. **Natural is sugar too.** Watch out for natural sweeteners, like honey, molasses or maple syrup, added to foods. Even though these may have more nutrients, they still are sugar.
5. **Shop the perimeter.** Concentrate on eating foods from the perimeter of the grocery store, i.e. fruits and vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy products, rather than processed foods from the center aisles.
6. **Make a breakfast swap.** Switch your cereal to one with little added sugar.
7. **Flavor it yourself.** Instead of buying fruit yogurt, buy the plain and add your own fruit. Often the fruit in flavored yogurt is sweetened.
8. **Check the can.** Buy canned fruits in water or natural juice instead of syrup.
9. **Bake with less.** When baking, cut the amount of sugar by one measuring cup. This usually works just fine.
10. **Be aware.** Keep a journal of what you eat to see where sugar creeps into your diet.

Eat
Breakfast

Get
Cooking

Eat
More Fish

Get
Moving

Good
Fats

Go
Meatless

Veggie
Up

Get
Stronger

Sugar
Down

Make
Grains
Whole

Portion
Power

Be
Mindful