

Eat Right

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

Eating Right with Less Added Sugars

GO FURTHER with FOOD by incorporating these food, nutrition and physical activity tips.



Sugar is found naturally in some foods and drinks, like fruit and milk, but it is also added to many of them. Added sugars give these items a sweet taste. 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 many 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

Soon you'll be able to determine the amount of added sugars by looking at the Nutrition Facts label. For right now, the best place to find this information is in 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 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 smaller amounts.

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.

- Substitute 100% fruit juice for fruit punch and other fruit-flavored drinks.
- 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, low-fat milk or 100% fruit or vegetable juice instead of sweetened beverages, like energy, soft and sports drinks.

The *2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend less than 10% of calories come from added sugars. To find out how many calories you are getting from added sugars, you can track your foods and drinks using the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) SuperTracker. Visit www.ChooseMyPlate.gov for more information.

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



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.

This tip sheet is provided by:

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