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The Definition of Added Sugar

Sugars in your diet can be naturally occurring or added. Naturally occurring sugars are found naturally in foods such as fruit (fructose) and milk (lactose). Added sugars are sugars and syrups put in foods during preparation or processing, or added at the table.

Foods Containing Added Sugars

The major sources of added sugars are regular soft drinks, sugars, candy, cakes, cookies, pies and fruit drinks (fruitades and fruit punch); dairy desserts and milk products (ice cream, sweetened yogurt and sweetened milk); and other grains (cinnamon toast and honey-nut waffles).

Too Much Sugar Isn't So Sweet for Your Health

Many people consume more sugar than they realize. It's important to be aware of how much sugar you consume because our bodies don't need sugar to function properly. Added sugars contribute zero nutrients but many added calories that can lead to extra pounds or even obesity, thereby reducing heart health.

If you think of your daily calorie needs as a budget, you want to "spend" most of your calories on "essentials" to meet your nutrient needs. Use only left over, discretionary calories for "extras" that provide little or no nutritional benefit, such as sugar.

The Hidden Ingredient with Many Different Names

To figure out if a packaged food contains added sugars, and how much, you have to be a bit of a detective. On the Nutrition Facts panel, the line for sugars contains both the natural and added types as total grams of sugar.

There are four calories in one gram, so if a product has 15 grams of sugar per serving, that's 60 calories just from the sugar alone, not counting the other ingredients.

To tell if a processed food contains added sugars, you need to look at the list of ingredients. Sugar has many other names. Besides those ending in "ose," such as maltose or sucrose, other names for sugar include high fructose corn syrup, molasses, cane sugar, corn sweetener, raw sugar, syrup, honey or fruit juice concentrates. Learn more about reading food labels.

Limit your consumption of foods with high amounts of added sugars, such as sugar-sweetened beverages. Just one 12-ounce can of regular soda contains eight teaspoons of sugar, or 130 calories and zero nutrition.

How much is just right?

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends limiting the amount of added sugars you consume to no more than half of your daily discretionary calories allowance. For most American women, that's no more than 100 calories per day, or about 6 teaspoons of sugar. For men, it's 150 calories per day, or about 9 teaspoons. The AHA recommendations focus on all added sugars, without singling out any particular types such as high-fructose corn syrup. For more detailed information and guidance on sugar intake limits, see the scientific statement in the August 2009 issue of *Circulation*, Journal of the American Heart Association.

Source: American Heart Association

Daily Added Sugar Limit

