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Hidden Sugars

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. Funded by the USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).



Sugars listed on the Nutrition Facts of food labels include sugars that are found naturally in food and sugars that are added to foods. For example:

Regular milk contains lactose or “milk sugar” which is found naturally in milk and it does not have a sweet taste. The grams of sugar on the Nutrition Facts label includes just lactose. Chocolate milk contains lactose but also has added sugars to make the milk sweet. The grams of sugar on the nutrition facts label will be higher because it includes the lactose or the natural sugar and added sugars.

Added sugars in our foods are a source of “empty calories.” This means they do not contain important vitamins and minerals that our bodies need. Too much sugar can cause weight gain, cavities, and contribute to diabetes. Healthy people should consume foods with added sugars in moderation.

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines Recommend:

Limiting added sugars to less than 10% of total daily calories

People with Diabetes should try to limit foods with added sugars as much as possible.

Sugars are measured on the Nutrition Facts label.

4 grams of sugar= 1 teaspoon



Here is a List of Some “Hidden” Sugars

“OL” sugars	“OSE” sugars	Other Forms of Sugar
Sorbitol	Dextrose	Corn syrup
Glycerol	Fructose	Can Sugar
Erythritol	Sucrose	High fructose corn syrup
Mannitol	Maltose	Honey

The average American consumes about 156 pounds of added sugar per year!

That is like consuming 31-five pound bags of sugar each year!



The added sugars come from a variety of foods:

- 51 pounds (33%) soda, sport and fruit flavored drinks
- 40 pounds (26%) prepared foods like canned fruits, ketchup or peanut butter
- 29 pounds (18%) sugar that we add to food
- 15 pounds (10%) Sweetened fruit drinks
- 8 pounds (5%) candy
- 8 pounds (5%) cake



If you want to avoid hidden sugars:

- Read the food label. Ingredients are listed in order of weight, so anything with sugar, corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup or sucrose near the top of the list is likely to be high in sugar.
- When you choose a product with added sugar look at the portion size on the Nutrition Facts label. Example: A 20 ounce soda or fruit drink is actually 2 and 1/2 servings. If you drink that in one sitting you are consuming 2 and 1/2 times the calories and sugar listed on the label.
- Simply avoid processed foods and beverages as much as possible. Choose fresh fruits for a “naturally sweet” snack and water as a beverage.
- Don't be fooled by health claims. Foods “low in fat and salt” may contain a lot of sugar that was added to make the food taste better.



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