

W.O.W.

WAC ON WELLNESS

THE SWEET DANGERS OF ADDED SUGAR ON YOUR HEART

Sugar (n): a sweet substance usually in the form of white or brown crystals or white powder that comes from plants and is used to make foods sweeter. Comes from plants, healthy right? Yes, sugars are found naturally in foods like plants and dairy, however humans have extracted these sweet desires and have added them to every imaginable type of processed food.

Unfortunately, a sugar-laden diet may be affecting your risk of heart disease even if you aren't overweight. With heart disease being the leading cause of death for both men and women, we all need to be aware of all the factors playing a role in heart health. For decades, the "heart healthy" diet has called for reduced sodium and saturated fat. Now however, research argues strongly for decreased dietary added sugars to be included with this as well.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recommends that women get no more than 6 teaspoons (24 grams) and men no more than 9 teaspoons (36 grams) of added sugars per day. To put this into perspective, a 12-ounce can of regular soda contains about 9 teaspoons of sugar, so drinking even just one a day would put all women and most men over the daily limit.

Why so strict? Evidence is overwhelming for the multiple ill effects added sugar has on our health including increase risk of high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes. Furthermore, according to the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, "the more added sugars people consume, the higher their triglyceride levels, total and LDL cholesterol, and blood pressure, independent of sugars' effect on body weight."

In addition to educating about "added sugars" it is important to make the distinction with sugars common in nature including those in fruits, milk, and vegetables. These are okay to eat and are more than encouraged. However, it is all of the sugars that are added during processing or added at the table that must be limited.

Sugar by any other name...added sugars can appear on food labels in many disguises. Here are a few to watch out for:

- Any ingredient with the word "sugar" including beet sugar, cane sugar, raw sugar
- Any ingredient with the word "nectar" including agave nectar or fruit nectar
- Any ingredient with the word "syrup" including corn syrup and maple syrup
- Any ingredient ending in "-ose" including maltose, glucose, dextrose, and galactose
- Cane juice
- Caramel
- Honey
- Molasses

Challenge: I challenge you to look for these added ingredients, track what you eat for a day and then calculate the amount of added sugars you ate in that day. Staying under 6/9 teaspoons of added sugar is harder than you may think!



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