

Added Sugars

Written by Christian Fell, a UNC dietetic intern currently at Carolina Meadows for his food service management rotation.



Sugar is a type of carbohydrate and comes in many forms. The sugars that are usually of concern are *added sugars*. Particularly when sugar is not naturally in an item and is added to make it more palatable, sweeter, or attractive.

How much sugar should you have and how might it impact your well-being? The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends no more than 10% of your total daily calories coming from added sugars. In a 2,000-calorie diet, that equates to 200 calories or 50 grams of sugar (12 teaspoons). However, the American Heart Association recommends no more than 24 grams for adult women and 36 grams for adult men per day.

Added sugars are a concern because they provide minimal nutritional benefit aside from calories. Over time, they can displace items that have more vitamins and minerals and lead to unintended weight gain. Research found that individuals who consume too much sugar daily are 38% more likely to suffer from heart disease. Additionally,



©2019 American Heart Association, Inc.

consuming excessive amounts of added sugars can increase your risk for type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and tooth decay.

Total Calories Per Day	Total Added Sugar Limit	Teaspoon Equivalent
1,200 Total Calories	120 Calories (30 Grams)	7.2
1,400 Total Calories	140 Calories (35 Grams)	8.4
1,600 Total Calories	160 Calories (40 Grams)	9.6
1,800 Total Calories	180 Calories (45 Grams)	10.8
2,000 Total Calories	200 Calories (50 Grams)	12
2,200 Total Calories	220 Calories (55 Grams)	13.2
2,400 Total Calories	240 Calories (60 Grams)	14.4
2,600 Total Calories	260 Calories (65 Grams)	15.6

Identifying Added Sugars in Ingredient Lists

Added sugars can be found in a variety of items, both obvious and not so obvious. First is in sugar-sweetened beverages (sodas, sweet tea, and fruit juices that are not 100% juice). The next item consists of sweets and baked goods (cookies, cakes, pies, candy, and ice cream). The last category is the “forgotten” or hidden items. This list varies greatly but may include cereals, sauces and condiments, and yogurts. Added sugars can also be found on food labels as syrups (corn, malt, and maple), molasses, agave, honey, and fruit nectars. If you are unsure, read the nutrition facts label first and the ingredients list second. The latest nutrition facts label indicates added sugar as a separate row for easier identification.

Added Sugars Commonly Found on Ingredient Lists	
Agave Nectar	Fruit Nectars
Brown Sugar	Glucose
Cane Crystals	Honey
Corn Sweetener	Invert Sugar
Corn Syrup	Malt Syrup
Dextrose	Maltose
Evaporated Cane Juice	Maple Syrup
Fructose	Molasses
Fruit Juice Concentrates	Sucrose

Source: [Added Sugars. Harvard](#)

Identifying Added Sugars on the New Nutrition Facts Label

Nutrition Facts

8 servings per container

Serving size 8 fl oz (240mL)

Amount per serving

Calories 110

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 5mg	0%
Total Carbohydrate 27g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
Total Sugars 25g	
Includes 23g Added Sugars	46%
Protein 0g	
Vitamin D 0mcg	0%
Calcium 0mg	0%
Iron 0mg	0%
Potassium 40mg	0%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

1. 25 grams of total sugars per serving
 2. 23 grams of added sugars per serving
- *the remaining 2 grams are from natural sugars

5% of the daily value or less per serving is considered a low source of added sugars.
20% of the daily value or more per serving is considered a high source of added sugars.

Source: [Added Sugars on the New Nutrition Facts Label. FDA.](#)

Tips for Reducing Intake of Added Sugars

1. Pay attention to serving sizes. For instance, consider an item that contains 10 grams of added sugars and 8 servings per container. If you eat two servings, you consumed 20 grams of added sugars.

2. Sleep! Get enough sleep when possible. Research has shown that individuals who are sleep deprived are more likely to gravitate towards processed, calorically dense foods that offer little nutritional value.
3. Reduce intake of sugar-sweetened beverages and limit how much sugar you add to coffee and tea. Read the nutrition facts labels and choose naturally sweetened beverages and those lower in added sugars. Mix it up by making your own infused water!
4. Cereals, granolas and yogurts may have more sugar than you think. Check the nutrition facts label and choose a brand lower in added sugars.
5. Use more whole fruits to make sauces and providing sweetness while sparingly using syrups, jams and jellies with added sugar.
6. Use natural sugars in foods. For example, in spaghetti, instead of adding raw sugar, try adding shaved or pureed carrots to your marinara for an enhanced natural sweetness.
7. Limit intake of ultra-processed foods (e.g., chips, frozen desserts, bakery goods).
8. Try experimenting with dark chocolate and unsweetened foods and introducing bitter components into your dishes.

References

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/added-sugar/art-20045328#:~:text=The%202015%2D2020%20Dietary%20Guidelines,or%2048%20grams%20of%20sugar.>

https://health.gov/sites/default/files/2019-10/DGA_Cut-Down-On-Added-Sugars.pdf

<https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/dietary-guidelines-and-myplate/looking-to-reduce-your-familys-added-sugar-intake-heres-how>

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/1819573>

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3763921/>