



# Sugar and Health

## SUGAR FACTS

**Sugar goes by many names.** The term “sugar” refers to sweet-tasting carbohydrates including sucrose, glucose, fructose, and lactose. Naturally-occurring sugars found in nutrient-rich foods and beverages such as fruits, vegetables, and milk are an expected component of a healthy, balanced diet.<sup>1</sup> Sugar that is added to food — commonly in the form of sucrose or high-fructose corn syrup — adds empty, nutrition-less calories to our diet.<sup>2</sup>

**Americans eat far too much sugar.** Added sugar in processed and packaged foods and beverages has dramatically increased our consumption of sugar.<sup>1</sup> Today, the typical American consumes 15–21 teaspoons of added sugar per day,<sup>3</sup> which far exceeds the recommended daily limit of 5–9 teaspoons.<sup>2</sup> A single 20-ounce bottle of soda contains 17 teaspoons of added sugars,<sup>4</sup> which is nearly double the upper daily limit.

**Sugar-sweetened beverages\* are the single largest source of added sugar in the U.S. diet.<sup>5</sup>** Roughly one-third of added sugar in the U.S. diet is consumed in the form of soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages.<sup>3</sup> The simplest way to decrease sugar consumption is to drink fewer sugar-sweetened beverages.

**High fructose corn syrup (HFCS).** HFCS and sugar are chemically very similar. Typically, both contain almost equal portions of glucose and fructose and therefore contribute equally to weight gain.<sup>6</sup> Two-thirds of all HFCS is consumed as soda.<sup>7</sup>

## SUGAR & HEALTH

**High sugar intake is detrimental to health.** High sugar intake commonly leads to higher body weight, greater risk of diabetes and cardiovascular risk factors, and greater incidence of dental caries.<sup>2</sup>

**Is HFCS worse than table sugar?** There is little evidence, as of yet, that HFCS has biochemically contributed to the obesity epidemic other than through its massive consumption.<sup>6</sup> However, one recent study found that the HFCS used in many popular sugar-sweetened beverages had significantly more fructose than glucose, much more than previously assumed.<sup>8</sup> Since fructose has more harmful effects than glucose when consumed in high amounts,<sup>9,10</sup> if this finding proves correct, this form of HFCS would likely be more detrimental than sucrose.

**\* NOTE:** *Sugar-sweetened beverages refers to all beverages with added sugars including carbonated soft drinks, juice drinks, sports drinks, flavored and enhanced waters, sweetened teas and energy drinks.*

## REFERENCES

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