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Sugars

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When most people think of sugars they think sweets, and gaining weight. Reality is sugar itself doesn't make you gain weight. So why are there recommendations about sugar to eat sugar in moderation or decrease sugar consumption? Here are the answers but first you need to understand sugar.

There are three simple sugars, fructose, glucose and lactose. The other sugar name that you hear quite often is sucrose which is another name for table sugar and a combination of fructose and glucose. These sugars occur naturally in foods and are sometimes added, but no matter what the name or form, they all contribute 4 calories per gram. For example, many fruits and vegetables get their sweet taste from fructose, glucose and sucrose. Lactose is a milk sugar and is considered as tasting less sweet.

In fact, the only difference between a sugar that is naturally occurring (sugars that are found in unprocessed foods) and added sugar (sugar added during processing) is the source.

Sugars do more than just taste good! According to the International Food Information Council sugars play a very important role in our food:

- They add texture, flavor, and color to baked foods helping them brown evenly.
- They help bread to rise.
- They contribute to the "bulk," or volume, of ice cream, baked goods, and preserves and jams.
- They enhance the creamy texture of frozen desserts.
- They provide a satisfying body and texture in beverages.
- They enhance flavor and balance the natural acidity in non-sweet foods, such as salad dressings, sauces, and condiments.
- They preserve the flavor; aroma and color of the fruits used in jellies, jams, and preserves (and prevent spoilage after the jar is opened).
- They improve flavor and texture and help preserve the natural color and shape of the fruits used for canning and freezing.

So, what is sugar doing in your body? Sugars are part of Carbohydrates, which is the body's most important and readily available source of energy. The body breaks down foods into smaller units primarily glucose and fructose. These are absorbed into the blood stream, where they are transported to the cells of the body and are then converted into energy. Glucose requires insulin to move from the bloodstream into the cells. Fructose is usually converted to glucose before going on. Glucose is the body's primary fuel that powers everything you do: moving, breathing, thinking, and even digesting food.

To pull it all together does sugar cause weight gain? No. Weight gain is caused by eating more calories than you expend. No matter what the source of the calorie, proteins, fats, alcohol, carbohydrates, or sugars, too many calories could mean gaining weight. So why does everyone think it is sugar that is the problem. Many "sugary" foods are not usually high in nutrients (vitamins, minerals, etc.), so you are not getting as many benefits (good for you nutrients) as you would if you chose a different food. It is important to choose foods that

have added nutritional benefit for your body. If you are comparing the same foods (for example bread vs. bread), look at the entire label but remember adding sugar does add calories, no matter what kind of sugar it is. Cakes, cookies, and foods like this are delicious to eat but, they are not high in nutrients and should be done in moderation or a sometimes food. Some foods that are considered “good for you” may have a lot of added sugar, just remember it is not the sugar that is the problem, it is the added calories, were they necessary or should you choose a different product? People with weight problems do not necessarily consume more sugars than normal-weight people or have more of a sweet tooth. The bottom line is that people need to consume a variety of foods, choosing those with more nutrients more often and exercise.

Fructose:

Fructose is a simple sugar that occurs naturally in fruits, some vegetables, honey and table sugar. Fructose also makes up about half of the sugars in both table sugar and high fructose corn syrup. Fructose may also be added to certain foods as either crystalline fructose or liquid fructose. Like other sugars crystalline and liquid fructose supply about 4 calories per gram.

A Teaspoon of Sugar

When consumers hear the word “sugar,” they probably think of table sugar. Yet, table sugar is just one type of sugar found in foods. The term “sugar” is often used to designate a variety of caloric sweeteners. Although different types of sugars provide essentially about the same amount of calories by weight – 4 calories per gram – they are in their densities, or their weight per teaspoon. Sugars that weigh more per teaspoon, such as honey and corn syrup, provide more calories per teaspoon, but these sugars are slightly sweeter than table sugar, so a smaller amount of the sugar may be used to achieve the same sweetness.

High –Fructose Corn Syrup Facts:

High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is a mixture of glucose and fructose produced from corn syrup. Common uses for HFCS include beverages and baking applications. Regardless of the name, it contains approximately the same percentage of glucose and fructose as table sugar, some forms have a little more fructose ratio compared to glucose. High fructose corn syrup, table sugar, and honey are all digested in the same way and result in the same sugars being available to the body.

Does HFCS Cause Weight Gain?

The general advice about sugars and weight gain applies to HFCS as well. The questions about a possible link between HFCS and obesity, no research findings or evidence suggest that HFCS, or other sugars are the cause of the rising rates of obesity.