



Nutrition Nibbles

Sugar Substitutes: Part 1

I field a lot of questions about sugar substitutes...*What are they? How do they compare to sugar? Are they healthier than sugar?* In the next two months I hope to answer your questions about a variety of sugar substitutes and provide you with clear, succinct information so you can form your own opinion and decide if sugar substitutes earn a place in your pantry.

What is sugar? Sugar itself is a sweet substance obtained from sugarcane or sugar beets. White table sugar, a.k.a. sucrose, is composed of the simple carbohydrates, glucose and fructose. Per teaspoon, sugar has 16 calories. Sugar is found in a plethora of sweet foods including cakes, ice cream, and candy, but sugar also finds its way into savory staples including tomato sauce, bread, crackers, and packaged rice dishes.

What about high fructose corn syrup (HFCS)? HFCS is chemically similar to plain old sugar. High fructose corn syrup is also made up of glucose and fructose but in a slightly different ratio than sugar. It is cheaper to produce and used more abundantly in our food supply than table sugar is nowadays. Research is mixed as to whether or not HFCS is more dangerous to the body

than regular sugar. **Bottom Line:** HFCS is another form of added sugar in our diets. The American Heart Association recommends that woman consume no more than 100 calories per day from added sugars (the equivalent of 6 teaspoons of sugar) and men limit their sugar intake to 150 calories or 9 teaspoons. Be a label sleuth and check the ingredients list of all processed foods you eat for sugary sweeteners. **Hint:** any words that end in -ose indicate some type of sugar has been added.

Why should I avoid sugar anyway? Sugar is not required for our bodies to work properly. Too much sugar can contribute additional calories to our diet (without providing any nutritional benefits like vitamins or minerals) and lead to unwanted weight gain. Sugar has been linked to tooth decay, decreased heart health, and poor blood sugar control when consumed in excess.

Are natural sweeteners like honey and agave healthier for me? Don't we wish?! While often promoted as a healthier alternative to sugar, natural sweeteners including honey, maple syrup, molasses and agave nectar, tend to undergo some form of processing just like sugar and HFCS do. In addition, these natural

College Corner: Sneak Physical Activity Into Your Fall Schedule

Many of us start off the fall semester or quarter with good intentions of exercising more often. We begin strong by signing up for that spinning class or "butts-n-guts" session but find our dedication, not to mention motivation, dwindling as our calendar fills up. I'm here to suggest another way to get and stay active... exercise daily! What?!

Squeezing 30-60 minutes of physical activity into your daily life has numerous benefits including decreased health ailments (always important to ward off the common cold or flu), improved stress relief (what college student isn't stressed and busy?), and better weight management.

Does exercising daily sound overwhelming? Your physical activity does not have to occur during a continuous 30-60 minute time period. Aim to fit in additional bouts of movement in 5-10 increments. Check out this following example to see how fast exercise can add up:

Questions or Comments? Email me at marymahoneyrd@comcast.net

Sugar Substitutes continued...

sweeteners contain about the same amount of calories as sugar and little to no vitamins and minerals just like sugar. When consumed in excess (greater than 6-9 teaspoons per day as suggested above), natural sweeteners can lead to weight gain, poor diabetic control, and tooth decay. **Bottom Line:** These natural sweeteners should be considered alternate forms of added sugars in our diet. If choosing a natural sweetener, consider going for taste rather than non-existent health benefits.

Use this information to decide what forms of added sugar you'll choose for your daily teaspoons-worth. What you will probably discover as you look at more labels is that you have some reducing to do. **Here are a few ideas for limiting the added sugars in your diet:**

- Add less sugar to your diet when cooking and eating. Sweeten your cereal with fresh fruit or a sprinkle of cinnamon instead of adding sugar. When baking, reduce the amount of sugar you use by one-third and add a little extra vanilla extract.

- Skip the sodas, juices, and sweetened coffee drinks. Stick to water, the most natural sugar-free beverage around, or drink unsweetened coffee or tea.
- Reduce your intake of packaged foods and cook more often from scratch, focusing on plain whole grains, fresh fruits and vegetables, plain low-fat (1% or fat free) dairy, and lean protein foods.

Check out next month's article on Sugar Substitutes including the skinny on artificial sweeteners and sugar alcohols.

Sweet Math

1 gram sugar = 4 calories

1 teaspoon sugar = 4 grams

1 teaspoon sugar = 16 calories

Unfortunately, the grams of sugar on a *Nutrition Facts* label don't distinguish between added sugars and naturally present sugars. For a rough estimate of the number of teaspoons of sugar per serving, just take the grams of sugar listed and divide by four.

Ex. 12 oz serving of Coca-Cola contains 39 grams of sugar. Divide that by 4 and you will sip almost 10 teaspoons of sugar.

The average American consumes 22 teaspoons of added sugar each day!

College Corner continued...

- Park in the furthest lot and walk a few extra minutes to class (5 min)
- Take the stairs to your third floor classroom instead of the elevator (5 min)
- Walk down the hall to ask your friend a question in place of texting (2 min)
- Pace back and forth while talking on the phone (3+ min)
- Walk around the building or up and down the hallway between your classes (15 min)

Wow! You've just added a pretty painless 30 minutes of activity into your daily routine. Add an "official workout" a few extra times each week and you'll be squeezing in 60 minutes of exercise most days of the week!

Here are a few tips for reminding yourself to move more:

- Put that technology to work for you! Set your cell phone or email to send you a reminder message to move.
- Place a post-it note in your physical planner.
- Stick a note on your dashboard to remind yourself to park further away.
- Add exercise to your daily to-do list.

My Favorite Food

Many of my clients wonder (and some even have the courage to ask!) what I eat at home. I usually reply, "Food!" But for those of you who want specifics, here you go... My neighbor gave us a flat of Concord grapes the other night. (I'm not sure where he found them since you usually don't find them at the grocery store or farmers' market). I was excited to try something new!

Plump and juicy, you pop them out of their skins right into your mouth (watch out for those seeds!) Think of them as the oysters of the produce world! Rich in potassium, vitamin C, and proanthocyanidins, Concord grape products may be protective against heart disease, urinary tract infections, and breast cancer.