

Sugar...How Sweet it is! **Or Is It?**

Sugar gives our food and drinks that sweet taste that we all love. The problem is that sugar is absolutely everywhere. According to the Canadian Sugar Institute, Canadians are consuming 15 teaspoons of added refined sugar daily. Humans are naturally attracted to a sweet taste. Long ago, our ancestors would have eaten wild berries and fruit containing natural sugars to satisfy their sweet tooth. It was much harder to come by, so eating too much was never an issue.

Where is Sugar Hiding?

One of the problems in today's society is that sugar is hidden in many of the everyday foods we consume. Most people don't think they eat anywhere near the suggested 15 teaspoons daily. When we think of sugary foods, we think of sweets, like cookies, candy and other baked goods. For modern food manufactures, sugar is a cheap ingredient with a stimulating taste that encourages people to eat more. That is a win-win situation for these multimillion dollar companies. If you take the time to read the labels on the processed food you are eating, you will see that refined sugar has been added to most fruit drinks, pop, energy drinks, cereal, salad dressings, soups, pasta sauce, granola and other health bars, condiments, baked beans, non dairy creamers, flavored yogurt, lunch meat and alcoholic beverages just to name a few.

How is it hurting us?

In recent years, more and more research is being done on the negative effects of sugar on our body. In Nancy Appleton Ph. D.'s book "Lick the Sugar Habit", she cites 146 ways sugar can ruin your health. These include weight gain, lowering the immune system, interference with mineral absorption, assisting in the growth of Candida, increased cholesterol, heart disease and dental caries. It has also been connected with the development of diabetes and some forms of cancer.

All foods contain energy. Some foods release energy quickly and others release it more slowly. Sugar releases energy quickly. The energy sugar provides us is called "empty calories" because it provides no other nutritional value other than immediate energy. When your body has more sugar than it needs for energy, it converts the sugar to body fat and stores it. The high intake of sugar promotes overeating because of its stimulating taste. For many people, this becomes a vicious cycle, fueling the soaring obesity rates in North America.

What does "Glycemic Index" Mean?

The Glycemic Index of a food measures how fast food is likely to raise your blood sugar. The higher the glycemic index, the quicker the blood sugar will rise. When the blood sugar in your body is too low, you

can become shaky, irritable, tired and or hungry. When the blood sugar is too high, your body will release insulin to bring your blood sugar back down. Therefore, when you eat food with a high glycemic index, you may feel that initial boost of energy as your blood sugar rises in the short term, but this is followed by a sharp decrease in energy. For the most part refined sugars have the highest glycemic index of all foods, glucose being the highest at 100.

Labeling

The World Health Organization recommends that people limit their consumption of free sugars to less than 10% of their total energy intake. One way to know how much sugar is in a product is to see how high it is on the list of ingredients. The closer sugar is listed to the top, the higher the sugar content. Other names for sugar commonly seen on packaging include: caramel, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, honey, lactose, malt, maltose, maple syrup, molasses, rice syrup, sucrose.

So while a spoonful of sugar may help the medicine go down, you may want to think twice about how much is in **your** diet!