

Sweet Talk: Making Sense of Sweeteners

Natural Sugars

Those naturally occurring in foods



Added Sugars

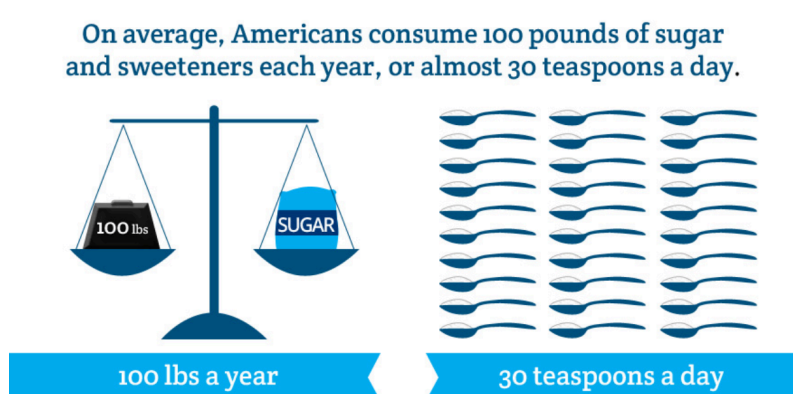
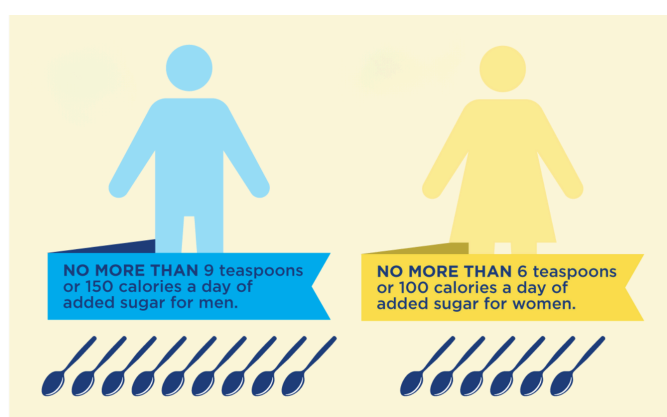
Those added to foods during processing, preparation, or at the table



Aim to consume less added sugar.

- **Excessive amounts may cause:**
 - Nutritional imbalances
 - Increased appetite and cravings
 - Mood disturbances and fatigue
 - Inflammation
 - Insulin resistance
 - Elevated triglycerides
 - Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease

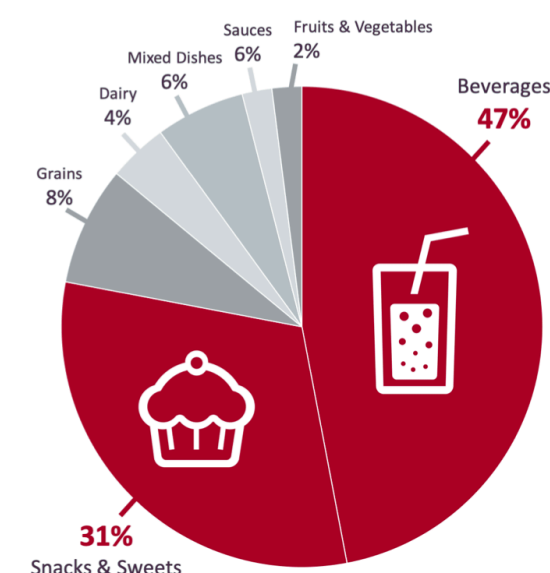
Guidelines vs. Reality



Tips for consuming less added sugar:

- **Start by drinking less of these:**
 - Soft drinks
 - Fruit drinks
 - Sport and energy drinks
 - Sweetened coffee and tea
- **Try these instead:**
 - Infused water (try fruit or tea bags)
 - Add a splash of juice to water
 - Flavored sparkling water (try Spindrift or Ciao)
 - Plain sparkling water or club soda
 - Coffee with milk
 - Unsweet tea (or at least ½ & ½)

Sources of added sugar:



- **Be a savvy shopper:**
 - Compare brands of similar products for added sugar amounts.
 - Certain products will always have some amount of added sugar - do the best you can.
 - "No added sugar" is not the same as "No added sweeteners."

- **Flavor foods yourself:**
 - Plain instant oats (add your own flavor)
 - Plain yogurt (add your own flavor)
 - Unsweetened cereals (add fruit)
 - Unflavored protein powders
 - Make your own baked goods
 - Make your own salad dressing

A few more thoughts:

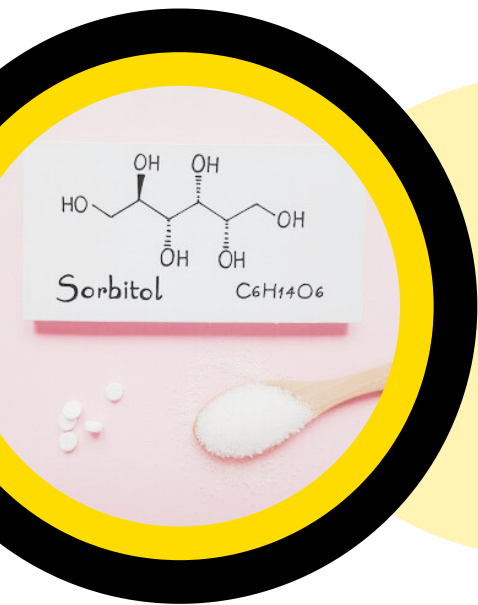
- Consume added sugar in ways you'll enjoy it most (you'd probably rather have it in a piece of chocolate than spaghetti sauce).
- Value quality over quantity (sure, you can eat a whole pint of Halo Top, but maybe you would enjoy a small bowl of real ice cream more).
- Give yourself permission to enjoy some added sugar - being too restrictive can backfire and cause overconsumption.
- Be patient - your taste buds will adjust to less sweetness over time!

Sugar Substitutes

Types of sugar substitutes:

- **Non-nutritive sweeteners:** Created synthetically and contain no calories or sugar. The following are FDA-approved:
 - Aspartame (Equal, Nutrasweet)*
 - Sucralose (Splenda)*
 - Saccharin (Sweet N' Low)*
 - Acesulfame Potassium (Sweet One, Sunett)
 - Neotame (Newtame)
 - Advantame (Advantame)

* *The Center for Science in the Public Interest designates these as unsafe.*



- **Sugar alcohols:** Created synthetically and generally have about half as many calories as sugar. May cause gastrointestinal distress. The FDA designates them as GRAS (Generally Regarded As Safe).
 - Erythritol
 - Isomalt
 - Lactitol
 - Maltitol
 - Sorbitol
 - Xylitol

- **Novel Sweeteners:** Derived from natural sources and are not significant sources of calories or sugar. The FDA designates them as GRAS (Generally Regarded As Safe).
 - Allulose
 - Monk fruit
 - Steviol glycosides (Truvia, PureVia)
 - Tagatose



Safety Considerations

- Children should avoid long-term use of sugar substitutes due to unknown effects.
- For various reasons, some sugar substitutes do not have an “acceptable daily intake” established. These include sugar alcohols, allulose, monk fruit and tagatose.
- Safety information about these sweeteners continues to evolve as more long-term research is conducted.

Efficacy Considerations

- In 2018, a systematic review of 56 studies concluded that:
 - there were no clear differences in health outcomes between those who used sugar substitutes and those who did not.
 - there were no clear health benefits to consuming sugar substitutes, but potential harms could not be excluded.
 - the quality of research on this topic is low.
- In 2023, the World Health Organization advised against using sugar substitutes to reduce body weight and lower the risk of diet-related diseases.
- The current trend of research on sugar substitutes includes examining the metabolic impact of these sweeteners, as well their effect on the gut microbiome.

The Bottom Line

- Focus on lowering intake of both added sugars and sugar substitutes, so that you minimize your overall cravings for sweetness.
- A product that contains sugar substitutes is not automatically “healthy.” Consider the overall nutrient-density of that food or beverage before consuming.
- Stay mindful of how sugar substitutes may impact your mindset and behaviors (i.e. “I had a Diet coke with dinner so now I can have dessert!”)