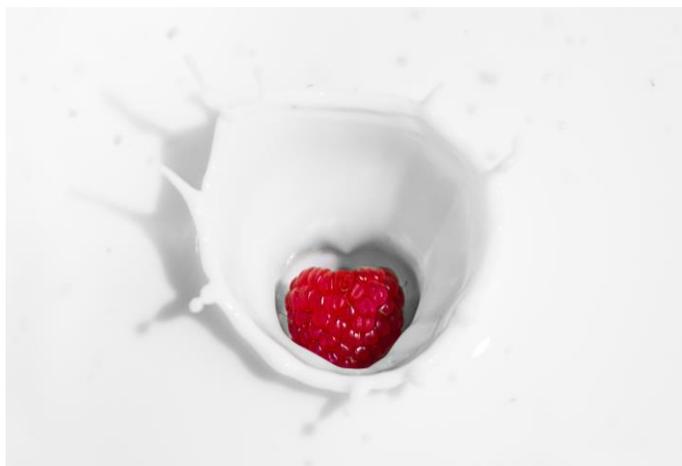


# Are You Avoiding Some Healthy Foods Because of the Sugar?



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(Image source: Pixabay.com)

The public has been hearing a lot about cutting back on sugar. The original recommendations—from the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA2015), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the American Heart Association (AHA)—were about “added” sugar, not the sugars found naturally in foods such as fruit and milk. “Added sugars” are those sugars added during processing or added when we eat, such as adding sugar to coffee.

## Recommendations for sugar

The reason for the original recommendations wasn’t because sugar is a “toxic” substance as some articles claim. Rather, excessive “added sugars” can:

- add extra calories—unless a person is very active—which may lead to weight gain and an increased risk of heart disease and diabetes.
- provide calories but no vitamins or minerals. In turn, some people may cut back eating foods that have more nutrients to avoid gaining weight. (See Table 1 comparing milk, fruit and regular carbonated cola.)
- play a role in tooth decay.

4 grams of granulated white sugar equals approximately 1 teaspoon of sugar

The **DGA2015** recommend consuming less than 10 percent of calories per day from added sugars for children and adults. This amount was chosen as—for most calorie levels—there aren’t enough calories left after meeting food group recommendations to stay within a desirable calorie range. For a 2,000-calorie level, this amount would be less than 200 calories of added sugar or as one example, about 12 teaspoons of granulated white sugar.

**Table 1: Nutrient Comparison of Milk, Fruit and Regular Carbonated Cola**

NUTRIENT	A TYPICAL SERVING SIZE		
	Milk, nonfat, fluid, with added vitamins A & D, 1 cup	Oranges, raw, 1 large, 3-1/16” diameter	Cola, regular, 12 fluid ounces
Calories	83	86	155
Protein, g	8.3	1.7	0
Fiber, total dietary, g	0	4.4	0
Sugars, total, g	12 (naturally occurring)	17.2 (naturally occurring)	36.78 (added)
Calcium, mg	200	74	4
Vitamin C, mg	0	97.9	0
Potassium, mg	382	333	0
Vitamin A, IU	500	414	0
Vitamin D, IU	115	0	0

Source of Nutrients: USDA Food Composition Databases, retrieved 6/19/2017 at <https://ndb.nal.usda.gov/ndb/>

**AHA recommends** women consume less than 100 calories of added sugar per day (about 6 teaspoons or 24 grams of granulated white sugar) and men consume less than 150 calories per day (about 9 teaspoons or 36 grams).

**WHO recommends**, “... adults and children reduce their daily intake of free sugars to less than 10% of their total energy intake. A further reduction to below 5% or roughly 25 grams (6 teaspoons) per

day would provide additional health benefits.”  
(NOTE: “Free sugars” refers to “added sugars.”)

Does this mean you should never eat “added sugar?” No, but make sure foods with added sugars aren’t crowding out foods with more nutrients. A small amount of sugar may help us consume disease-fighting foods, according to Jill Weisenberger, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist and Certified Diabetes Educator. For example, think about eating cranberries “without some added sweetness,” says Weisenberger.

### Sources of “added” sugar

“About half the added sugars in our diets come from drinks—like sodas, fruit drinks, and other sweetened beverages,” according to the DGA2015.

Reading the list of ingredients on the label of foods can help identify added sugars. USDA identifies the following names among those for added sugar on food labels:

- anhydrous dextrose
- brown sugar
- confectioner's powdered sugar
- corn syrup
- corn syrup solids
- dextrose
- fructose
- high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS)
- honey
- invert sugar
- lactose
- malt syrup
- maltose
- maple syrup
- molasses
- nectars (e.g., peach nectar, pear nectar)
- pancake syrup
- raw sugar
- sucrose
- sugar
- white granulated sugar
- malt syrup

Food labels list ingredients from most to least by weight. The ingredient that weighs the most is listed first. Various forms of sugar are highlighted in red in this list of ingredients.

**Ingredients:** sugar, wheat, dextrose, honey, vegetable oil, salt ...

References for this article available at:  
<http://food.unl.edu/are-you-avoiding-some-healthy-foods-because-sugar>

### Sugar and the Nutrition Facts panel

Currently, the Nutrition Facts panel on foods isn’t required to show whether sugars are added or naturally occurring in a food. Figure 1 shows a current sample Nutrition Facts label.

In 2016, the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) published a regulation that, “Added sugars, in grams and as percent

Figure 1. Sugar listing on current Nutrition Facts panel

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Servings Per Container about 2	
Amount Per Serving	
<b>Calories</b> 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
<b>Total Fat</b> 12g	<b>18%</b>
Saturated Fat 3g	<b>15%</b>
Trans Fat 3g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 30mg	<b>10%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 470mg	<b>20%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 31g	<b>10%</b>
Dietary Fiber 0g	<b>0%</b>
Sugars 5g	
<b>Proteins</b> 5g	

Daily Value, will be listed on the label.” The date required for “Added Sugars” to be included on the food label was set for “July 26, 2018, with an additional year to comply for manufacturers with annual food sales of less than \$10 million.” After feedback from industry and consumer groups, FDA determined more time would be needed to meet this regulation. No new date has been determined as of this writing.

### Fruit juice and naturally occurring sugar

Though fruit juices contain naturally occurring sugar, USDA’s MyPlate nutrition guidelines state, “Make most of your choices whole or cut-up fruit, rather than juice, for the benefits that dietary fiber provides.”

In May 2017, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommended fruit juice shouldn’t be given to infants before 12 months of age unless clinically indicated. Juice should be limited to 4 ounces/day for toddlers 1 through 3 years of age; 4 to 6 ounces/day for children 4 through 6 years of age; and 8 ounces/day for youth 7 to 18 years of age. Excessive juice consumption was associated with tooth decay, diarrhea, flatulence and abdominal distension.

AAP further recommended toddlers shouldn’t be given juice from bottles or easily transportable cups that allow them to drink juice throughout the day. Toddlers shouldn’t be given juice at bedtime. Both practices increase the risk of tooth decay because of a long contact time between the sugar in fruit juice and children’s teeth.