

# Food is



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## **Be Intentional with Added Sugars**

We consume a lot of added sugars in our diet. This is not because we add sugar to every meal but because sugar has been added and packaged for us. Today we shall be discussing added sugars, their probable effects on our health, and practical steps on how we can cut down on our sugar consumption.

Sugar is a natural content of food. Many fruits, vegetables, and other foods contain natural sugar. Glucose is a form of simple sugar that is needed by the cells of our bodies to maintain proper function. Glucose is needed in generating energy. Without glucose and some other forms of sugar, the brain and other organs of the body cannot function appropriately. So why do health professionals speak so badly about sugar? Added sugar is what we all need to cut down on. They contribute calories without nutrients to our daily diet. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020, added sugars contribute an average of 270 calories or more than 13 percent of calories per day, in U.S populations. These excess calories lead to overweight and obesity. Maintaining a healthy weight can protect the body from many common chronic diseases. Therefore, one thing you and I can do to reduce excess weight is to cut down on added sugars.

There are many sources of added sugars in our daily diet. The top ones are beverages such as, soft drinks, fruit juices, alcohols, energy drinks, sweetened coffee and tea, and flavored water. The other major source is snacks and sweets such as, cakes, pies, cookies, doughnuts, ice creams, frozen desserts, and candies. Most pop (soda), on average, contain between 30 and 45 grams of added sugar per can. The American Heart Association suggests men should not eat more than 150 calories of added sugars per day, and women should not eat more than 100 calories of added sugars per day. This is equivalent to one 12 ounce can of soda. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2015-2020 recommends having less than 10 percent of our daily calories from added sugars. There are many studies that have found the associations of heart disease, diabetes and liver disease (fatty liver disease) with increased consumption of added sugars.

How to reduce added sugar

- Read food labels and choose foods with low sugar, light syrup, or little or no added sugars.
- Switch beverage and sweetened drinks for plain water.
- Reduce portions of sweetened beverages.
- Consume sweetened beverages less often. It is a healthy and a great idea to eat a meal with plain water.
- Decrease portion size of grain based desserts, dairy desserts, and sweet snacks.
- Choose fruit drinks with no added sugars.

There are intentional steps that can be taken to live a healthy life. Cutting down on added sugar is a healthy decision that is worth the change.