

By Any Other Name It's Still Sweetener

OHBA Wellness Pages

High fructose corn syrup has gotten plenty of attention these days from critics who warn it's become pervasive in our diets. Indeed, production and use has more than tripled during the past three decades as it replaced more expensive sugar in food production. Food refiners make it by turning cornstarch into a sugary syrup. That syrup is then made into other syrups and added to sodas, candy, cereal, bread, dairy products and assorted processed foods.

That level of processing may alarm some, but nutrition experts suggest the recent focus on high fructose corn syrup may be misplaced. Rather, we should look at our overall sugar intake. "What does matter is that most Americans are consuming way more sugars than we recommend," said Dr. Rachel Johnson, Bickford Professor of Nutrition at the University of Vermont in Burlington and a volunteer for the American Heart Association.

Too Much Sweet Stuff, Period

The American Heart Association recommends limiting intake of added sugar to 5 teaspoons for women and 9 teaspoons for men. For reference, one 12-ounce can of cola contains about 8 teaspoons of added sugar, for about 130 calories. Most American women should eat or drink no more than 100 calories per day from added sugars, and most American men should eat or drink no more than 150 calories per day from added sugars. Unfortunately, Americans are consuming 22 and 30 teaspoons of the sweet stuff each day.

But high fructose corn syrup isn't the only type of sugar contributing to our overconsumption. "Anything that ends in syrup or -ose, such as maltose or glucose, they're all sugars," Dr. Johnson said.

The American Heart Association does not distinguish between sources of sugar, instead focusing on overall intake and how it affects heart health and other conditions such as diabetes. "Sugars don't cause diabetes," Dr. Johnson said. "Overeating leads to being overweight and obesity, which are risk factors for diabetes."

Tracking Added Sugars

Tracking your consumption of added sugars can be tricky, since packaged foods don't list the number of teaspoons of sugar and few of us are getting our sugar by spooning it onto our food. Translating nutritional labels can take some number crunching.

Here are the important numbers to remember: There are **4 calories per gram** of sugar and **4 grams per teaspoon**. So if the label says it has 20 grams of sugar, that's 5 teaspoons, or about 80 calories from sugar. Scan the labels for all sources of sugar in processed foods and to check the number of grams of added sugars in the nutrition labels.

Don't be fooled by cane syrup or brown rice syrup found in many things marketed as "natural" foods such as granola or cereals, Dr. Johnson said. They also count as added sugars.

Not all sugar is added sugar. For example, sugars found in whole fruit or milk are naturally occurring. And you can easily avoid the added sugar in canned fruits by looking for those packaged in their own juices instead of syrup.

Limit your added sugar, but also remember that moderate use is OK in the context of an overall healthy eating plan.

"Use sugar to enhance the flavor or palatability of otherwise nutritious foods," Dr. Johnson said. "For example, try a little bit of sweetener to nonfat or low-fat plain yogurt, or a little bit of brown sugar to plain oatmeal."



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WELLNESS PAGE MEETING GUIDE

Topic: By Any Other Name It's Still Sweetener

Project: _____ Address: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Shift: _____

Number in crew: _____ Number attending: _____

Safety or Health issues discussed. Include recent accident investigations and hazards involving tools, equipment, the work environment, work practices and any Safety or Health recommendations:

Follow up on recommendations from last safety meeting:

Record of those attending:

Name: (please print)	Signature:	Company:
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Supervisor's remarks: _____

Supervisor: _____ (Print) _____ (Signature)