

## **REDUCING ADDED SUGAR IN YOUR PANTRY AND REFRIGERATOR**



Photo: iStock/tycoon751

Imagine sitting down to dinner and being told, “That meal comes with a side of sugar.” Your reaction may very well be surprise and confusion, you may even quickly lose your appetite and find yourself running for the door! It sounds a bit ridiculous yet that is essentially what happens to most of us without our knowledge every day due to added sugar in nearly 75% of packaged foods.

We generally associate added sugar with desserts, yet when reading food labels, one can find added sugar in canned soup, sauces, mayonnaise, mustard, bread, spice blends, dairy products, salad dressings, deli meats and salads, stocks and broths, and more.

Over the course of a day most Americans are consuming approximately 82+ grams of added sugar - almost a ½ cup - far more added sugar than recommended, which adds up to about 66 pounds of sugar per person per year (UCASF Sugar Science).

### **What is meant by “added sugar”?**

Many foods, such as fruit and dairy products, contain naturally occurring sugar. These foods also contain essential vitamins, minerals and fiber that promote good health and wellbeing and assist in proper digestion of the sugars.

Added sugars are those ingredients added to a product to sweeten it above and beyond any naturally occurring sugar, such as white or brown sugar or high fructose corn syrup. Added sugars are high in calories and do not contain vitamins and nutrients essential to our health.

Identifying added sugar can be challenging when reading labels because there are many names and types used. In addition, the total sugar content (meaning natural occurring sugar + added sugar) may be listed on a nutrition label but manufacturers are not required to separately list the amount of added sugar. This makes it difficult to discern how healthy or unhealthy a food product may be. Therefore, carefully reading food label and understanding various names for added sugar is important. To help identify added sugar when reading labels, check out this list of [61 Names for Sugar](#) provided by The University of California, San Francisco, Sugar Science.

### **Why is any of this important?**

Sugar that occurs naturally in food is much easier for our bodies to digest and use due to the other beneficial nutrients such as fiber. Added sugars process differently in our bodies and consuming too much can cause inflammation, joint pain, muscle aches, obesity, digestive issues, affect bone density, and increase chances of developing chronic disease, such as diabetes, heart or liver disease.

All of this is not to say that one should never enjoy a sweet treat or eat something that contains added sugar! It's more about increasing awareness of added sugar's negative affect on health, identifying sources of added sugar and learning about acceptable amounts to consume.

### How much added sugar is acceptable?

The consensus among health organizations, such as The American Heart Association and the World Health Organization, is that adults limit their added sugar intake to **6 teaspoons (25 grams)**, based on 2,000 calorie per day. The AHA states that men without current health issues may consume up to 9 teaspoons (38 grams) per day. Any adult with specific health issues should follow the advice of their health care providers. Children ages 2 - 12 should not consume more, and preferably less, than 6 teaspoons (25 grams) of added sugar per day.

### Helpful Resources:

Want to refresh your pantry and refrigerator with no added sugar items but don't have time to make everything from scratch? This list of products available in grocery stores and online will get you started - [REDUCING ADDED SUGAR IN THE PANTRY AND REFRIGERATOR](#).

For further reading on this topic, check out these articles -  
University of California, San Francisco, Sugar Science

- Hidden in Plain Sight  
<http://sugarscience.ucsf.edu/hidden-in-plain-sight/#.Ww2RwEgvw2w>
- How Much is Too Much?  
<http://sugarscience.ucsf.edu/the-growing-concern-of-overconsumption.html#.Ww2TI0gvw2x>

American Heart Association

- Sugar 101  
[http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Sugar-101\\_UCM\\_306024\\_Article.jsp#.Ww2Tkgvw2w](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Sugar-101_UCM_306024_Article.jsp#.Ww2Tkgvw2w)

Mayo Clinic

- Reading Food Labels - Tips If You Have Diabetes  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/diabetes/in-depth/food-labels/art-20047648>

New York Times - Smarter Living

- How to Stop Eating Sugar, by David Leonhardt  
<https://www.nytimes.com/guides/smarterliving/how-to-stop-eating-sugar>

