

What's the deal with sugar?

Sugar is often associated with foods such as cake, ice cream, cookies, and other dessert options, but those aren't the only food items that contain sugar. Actually sugar is found in a large variety of food that we eat, which may come as a surprise. Sugar can either be *naturally* found in food or *added* to food.

How much is too much?

Keeping in mind that 1 teaspoon of sugar is equal to 4 grams, the American Heart Association recommends no more than a total of 6 teaspoons for women and 9 teaspoons for men daily. That means that women are recommended to eat no more than 24 grams of sugar, and men 36 grams. Take 1 can Mountain Dew; in just one can there are 46 grams of sugar. This alone is over both the recommended amount for both men and women.

What about fruit?

We know that one of the reasons fruit is so delicious is the contributing sugar. The sugar in fruit is called fructose and it is a natural sugar, not added like most other food that we eat. Fruit is a better option because of the other benefits it provides to us which are fiber, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Fiber is not digested in the body and it has the effect to keep us full.

Is honey a good alternative?

In the end, sugar is sugar. For example, if you are adding honey to your oatmeal in the morning versus brown sugar it is still going to have the same effect on the body. Sugar comes in many forms, but one is not better than the other. The only thing that sugar provides is "empty" calories or calories that have no nutritional value. Better to cut it out all together if you can!

Is it bad to treat myself to a cookie?

No! Although it is important to have a well balanced diet with fruits, vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy, whole grains, and healthy fats it will not make or break your health to have a cookie every now and then! Keep in mind that eating should be enjoyable!