

# Added Sugars

A registered dietitian nutritionist (RDN) can help you set specific nutrition goals and guide you in planning a personalized healthy eating pattern.

To find an RDN in your area, visit "Find an Expert" at [www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org)



Sugars, syrups, and other caloric sweeteners are added to foods and drinks for their sweet flavor. These added sugars have other functions too, such as helping to balance flavors, adding texture, promoting browning in baked goods, and helping food last longer. Sugars are often added when food is processed or prepared. Health experts agree that most Americans should cut back on added sugars, which add calories to food and drinks but do not add any other nutrients. This does not include the naturally occurring sugars in foods, such as fruit and milk.

## Added Sugars and Health

Too much added sugar from food and drinks, along with lifestyle factors, has been linked to various health problems, including:

- dental cavities,
- weight gain leading to obesity,
- type 2 diabetes,
- heart disease, and
- some types of cancer.

In children, these health problems can last into adulthood. The foods that provide the most added sugars in Americans' diets are sugar-sweetened beverages, snacks, and sweet desserts.

## Setting Limits on Added Sugars

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that less than 10% of your daily calories should come from added sugars.

- For example, if you eat 2,000 calories a day, you should limit added sugars to no more than 50 grams per day (or 200 calories from added sugars). In teaspoons, this is no more than 12 teaspoons of sugar.
  - To put this in perspective, one 12-ounce can of soda may contain about 10 teaspoons or 40 grams of added sugars.
- For lower calorie diets, such as for young children who may only need 1,200 to 1,600 calories per day, the daily limit for added sugars is even lower.

Cutting back on foods and drinks that are high in added sugars helps make room for nutrient-rich foods and beverages, such as whole fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, peas, lean proteins, and low-fat and nonfat dairy products. When added sugars exceed your daily limit, it's hard to keep within your calorie goals and still meet nutrient needs.

Keep in mind that a limit on added sugars gives you flexibility to include occasional sweetened foods and treats. Sometimes, small amounts of added sugars make healthy foods more appealing. For example, oatmeal lightly sweetened with brown sugar, plain yogurt with honey or jam, and low-fat milk with chocolate syrup.



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