



Sugar Facts

What is sugar?

The word “sugars” describes the group of carbohydrates that provide energy to the body and help to make our food sweet. Sugars come in many forms and have different names because of their chemical structures. “Glucose”, “fructose” and “lactose” are different types of sugars. The word “sugar” usually means white or brown table sugar (or sucrose). It is found naturally in sugar cane and sugar beet, extracted through a refining process and then granulated.

Sources of sugars

Sugars can occur naturally in fruit, vegetables, starches, grains and most plant-based foods. Fructose is found in fruits and vegetables, while lactose is in milk and milk products.

“Added sugars” are the granules, syrups and sugars added to food and drinks for flavour, texture or colour.

“Free sugars” is another word to describe all the sugars added to foods during processing, *plus* it includes the sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and fruit juices.

The ingredient list

The ingredient list shows the ingredients in a packaged food. Ingredients are listed in order of weight, starting with the ingredient that weighs the most and ending with the ingredient that weighs the least. A food contains more of the ingredients listed first, and less of the ingredients at the end of the list.

Common words for sugar in the ingredient list:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agave nectar • Barley malt • Beet sugar • Brown sugar • Caramel • Corn sweetener • Corn syrup solids • Dextrin • Dextrose • Evaporated cane juice • Fructose • Fruit juice concentrations • Galactose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glucose • High-fructose corn syrup • Honey • Lactose • Liquid glucose-fructose • Liquid invert sugar • Maltodextrin • Maltose • Molasses • Raw cane sugar • Sucrose • Syrup (e.g., malt, barley, rice, maple, corn)

Label reading

The Nutrition Facts Table is found on almost all pre-packaged foods. It gives you information on the amount of 13 core nutrients and calories in an amount of food. "Sugars" is one of the core nutrients that must be listed on the Nutrition Facts Table. It is listed under carbohydrates. The Nutrition Facts Table lists total sugars, which includes both added and naturally occurring sugars.

All of the information in the Nutrition Facts Table is based on an amount of food called "serving size." The serving size is listed at the top of the Nutrition Facts Table. The serving size is not necessarily the amount of food you should eat. It is a reference amount for the calories and nutrients on the Nutrition Facts Table.

In the example for chocolate milk, the 26 g of total sugar per 1 cup (250 mL) would include the naturally occurring lactose, as well as the added sugars (e.g., sugar, glucose/fructose). The added sugars would be listed in the ingredient list.

INGREDIENTS: Partly skimmed milk, sugar, cocoa, salt, carrageenan, artificial flavour, colour, Vitamin A palmitate and Vitamin D3.

For more information:

- Visit Health Canada website: Nutrition Labelling at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/index-eng.php>

Is there any nutrition in sugar?

Other than providing energy, sugar offers little nutritional value. Most of the sugar we eat will be broken down into glucose or "blood sugar". It is the energy source for organs, tissues and all of the body's activities. Glucose is very important for healthy brain function. The brain uses glucose almost exclusively for its energy needs. Fruits, vegetables, milk and milk alternatives have naturally-occurring sugar, but also have important nutrients such as fibre (in vegetables and fruit), protein, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants.

Nutrition Facts	
Valeur nutritive	
Per 1 cup (250 mL)	
par 1 tasse (250 mL)	
Amount	% Daily Value
Teneur	% valeur quotidienne
Calories / Calories 170	
Fat / Lipides 2.5 g	4 %
Saturated / saturés 1.5 g	8 %
+ Trans / trans 0 g	
Cholesterol / Cholestérol 10 mg	3 %
Sodium / Sodium 180 mg	8 %
Carbohydrate / Glucides 26 g	9 %
Fibre / Fibres 0 g	0 %
Sugars / Sucres 26 g	
Protein / Protéines 9 g	
Vitamin A / Vitamine A	10 %
Vitamin C / Vitamine C	0 %
Calcium / Calcium	30 %
Iron / Fer	2 %
Vitamin D / Vitamine D	45 %

How much sugar is recommended for healthy eating?

Your body does not need to get carbohydrates from free sugars for good health. Free sugars are the sugars added to foods during processing and preparation, plus the naturally occurring sugars in honey, syrups and fruit juices. Eating free sugars promotes dental decay and adds extra calories with no nutritional benefit.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation recommends that in both adults and children, intake of free sugars not exceed 10% of total daily energy (calories).¹ Based on this, Sip Smart!™ Ontario uses a maximum daily amount of no more than 10 tsp (50 mL) of free sugar for children ages 7 – 13 years.

10 tsp = 10 sugar cubes = 10 sugar packs = 40 g

This Daily Sugar Total (DST) is to be used as a guideline only. The number would change slightly based on the student's age, gender, body composition, and activity level.

Included in the DST (10 tsp/50 mL sugar) is:

- Sugar added to flavoured milk and flavoured soy beverages
- Sugar added to soft drinks, fruit beverages, cocktails, energy and sports drinks
- Sugar in honey and syrups
- Naturally occurring sugar in 100% fruit juice. This is included because we don't actually need to drink juice to be healthy. It's easy to get the same nutrients (and more) from whole fruits

Not included in the DST is:

- Naturally occurring sugar in milk (lactose)
- Naturally occurring sugar in plain soy beverages

As an example, if a child consumes one 355 mL can of pop, which contains 10 - 12 teaspoons of sugar, he has reached his DST (daily sugar total) for that day!

For more information on the Heart and Stroke Foundation's advice on ways to reduce sugar consumption visit their website at www.heartandstroke.com.

Does sugar cause hyperactivity?

No! Although it is a commonly held belief that sugar causes hyperactive behaviour in children, research has not found any negative effects of sugar on behaviour. Children can become naturally excited and active for parties and other special events, so it can be easy to think that eating special treats, such as cake and candy, is the cause. Research makes it quite clear that sugar does not cause hyperactivity.

¹ Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada Position Statement. Sugar, Heart Disease and Stroke. Available at http://www.heartandstroke.com/site/c.ikiQLcMWJtE/b.9201361/k.47CB/Sugar_heart_disease_and_stroke.htm

Commonly reported negative effects of sugar on children’s behaviours may be because people closely watch a child’s behaviour and *expect* it to cause problems. Caffeine found in chocolate drinks or colas could have an effect on a child’s behavior.

There are other reasons besides hyperactivity to limit children’s sugar intake, including to prevent dental caries and to limit excess calories.

KEY MESSAGES:

- Sugar is a type of carbohydrate.
- Sugar can be naturally present in food (e.g., lactose in milk) or added to food at the table and during processing (e.g., sucrose – white sugar).
- There are many names for added sugars that can be found in ingredient lists.
- Added sugars provide calories but no nutritional value.
- Limit food and beverages high in added sugar or free sugars.
- A high intake of sugars can contribute to poor oral health and other chronic diseases.
- Sugar does not cause hyperactivity.

Adapted from materials created and developed by the BC Pediatric Society.



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