

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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How Do You Like Your Sugar

Here are some statements about sugar. Which do you agree with? Sugar tastes good. Sugar makes us fat. Sugar is bad for us. Sugar causes diabetes. Done?

Sugar tastes good. Duh, we all know that! It does. New born babies love sugar water, smile when they get it, and will gladly drink more of it. Sugar makes us fat. Well, too much of it can. But so can too much fat, or even too much protein. Sugar is bad for us. Not directly. Sugar gives us energy. Our brains have to have sugar to function. This answer has to be 'it depends.' Sugar causes diabetes. Nope, it does not. If you have diabetes, eating a lot of plain sugar would definitely not be good. But it doesn't cause diabetes.

So, if we like it, and it's not that bad for us, what is all the fuss over sugar about? As with so many other things, it's the details that make the difference. Two of those details are what else comes with the sugar and the form it is in. The answers to those questions make a huge difference in what sugar can do to your body.

What else comes with your sugar and what shape is it? If you are drinking sodas every day, you are getting lots of sugar, with liquid, acid, food coloring and usually artificial flavoring. Even if you drink your sugar in fruit punches or energy drinks, that's still about all you are getting. In fruit juices the flavoring and coloring might be natural, but there's not a lot else there. What you get from these drinks is lots of sugar calories, and nothing to slow down how fast their sugar gets into your bloodstream. You'll get a sugar surge, then a big drop when it's used up.

Unfortunately that's not the only problem. Recent research finds that when we drink our calories, our brains don't register it as well. Sugar in liquids seems to slip past the energy monitors of our brain and stomach. Pretty soon we're hungry again, even though we might have just drunk several hundred calories' worth of sugar.

But if we eat the same amount of sugar as whole fruit, even if it's canned or frozen, it registers in our brains. Applesauce and fresh apples both satisfy our hunger much better than apple juice. Why? Partly it's because of the fiber. Fiber takes longer to go through our mouths, and our

stomachs. We don't digest fiber, so it keeps our intestines feeling full longer. And that gives time for it to register in our brains.

Plus, it takes a while to chew our way through 3 or four apples, much longer than it does to gulp down a glass of apple juice! The chewing and swallowing get a message to our brains that we are eating. That helps turn off the hunger and keep us feeling satisfied longer. So eat your apples, instead of drinking apple-flavored water!

The other detail is what else comes with the sugar. Besides fiber, eating an apple will give us vitamins and minerals. The phytonutrients such as antioxidants will help protect us from various illnesses. A slice of whole grain bread will turn into sugar during digestion too. But the bran fiber slows down the process. Whole grains also provide a wide variety of antioxidants that work in different ways to help maintain our health. Even vegetables will get turned into sugars, but with dozens if not hundreds of other nutrients in addition to sugar.

When we eat or drink foods with refined or purified sugars, we mostly get sugar. When we eat whole foods, whether they are fruits, whole grains or vegetables, we get a lot more nutrition for our calories. Those are the details that make the difference. Keep your body happy: choose fruits, whole grains and veggies instead of sweetened water!

This creamy, chilly, fruity dessert is easy to prepare in advance, so you have less work to do the day of the picnic or party. Most of the sweetness comes from the fruit.

Frozen Fruit Dessert

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| 1 (4-oz) pkg low fat cream cheese, softened | ¼ cup sugar or sweetener |
| 1 (8-oz) can pineapple tidbits, drained | 1 cup blueberries, fresh/frozen |
| 1 cup strawberries, fresh/frozen | 1 large banana, sliced |
| 3 Tbsp chopped pecans, toasted | |
| 8 oz carton fat free frozen whipped topping, thawed | |

Beat cream cheese in large bowl of electric mixer until fluffy. Gradually add sugar. Stir in fruits and nuts. Fold in whipped topping. Pour into 9 x 9 inch dish or pan. Cover and freeze at least 8 hours. Let stand 10 min at room temperature to soften before serving. Cut into squares to serve. Serves 9.

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