

Fact sheet - sugar

Sugar gives you ‘empty calories’ - that is calories with no other nutrients: no vitamins, no minerals, no fibre, no protein. In Britain on average we buy almost a pound of packet sugar per person per week and we eat twice as much as that when you count all the sugars added to processed foods such as sweets, soft drinks, biscuits and cakes.

There are 2 main problems with eating too much sugar:

- Firstly, sugar promotes tooth decay, especially when you have sugary snacks and drinks frequently throughout the day.
- Secondly, sugar promotes obesity. Adding sugar to foods makes it easier for us to eat too much - partly because our taste buds have been trained to crave for sugary foods and sweet foods are usually low in fibre so they don't fill you up very much. Cutting back on sugar is the easiest way to cut calories without losing any nutrients.

Watch out for:

- Sucrose
- Glucose
- Dextrose
- Fructose
- maltose

on the ingredients list of packaged food. They are all forms of sugar. You'll find them in savoury foods like soups and sauces, and cheesy biscuits. Honey, syrup, raw sugar, brown sugar, cane sugar and muscovado are other names you might see. These can cause tooth decay and help make you fat just as easily as plain white sugar.

How to cut down on sugar:

- try drinking your tea or coffee without sugar. You might find it easier to cut down a little at a time
- choose low calorie soft drinks or un-sweetened fruit juices
- buy tinned fruit in natural juice rather than in syrup
- try halving the sugar in your recipes (except jam and meringues)
- avoid breakfast cereals with added sugar
- for snacks try fresh fruit, crispy vegetables, natural yoghurt, roast chick peas or unsalted nuts
- avoid cakes and biscuits - they contain lots of sugar.

Information Sheet 3

What are calories?

Whatever your reasons for wanting to lose weight, one overwhelming reason may be that it will improve your health and decrease the risk of developing a wide range of diseases. In short, it will give you a healthier lifestyle. So, how have you fared on your first weeks journey towards this healthier lifestyle?

- are you still nibbling sugary snacks?
- are you skipping meals?
- what about alcohol?
- are you still taking sugar?
- are you having breakfast?

Calories

Most seasoned dieters will know that calories are the enemy's front-line troops. But what exactly is a calorie?

It is not a protein, carbohydrate, fat, vitamin or mineral. It is simply a measurement. We use it to recognise those foods that contain energy. But it is easy to consume foods whose calories are so called empty calories, such as Mars bars. These types of food do not contain nutrient rich calories and therefore do not supply us with the goodness our bodies require. We should use our calorie knowledge to help us to choose foods that are essential to a healthy lifestyle i.e. foods that provide us with protein, vitamins, minerals and fibre. We should avoid foods that are high in fat or sugar content and are also high in calories. So, we should attempt to reduce our calorie intake by trying to follow these simple rules:

- 1) Reduce the amount of fat we are taking in. This can be done in the following ways:**
 - grill instead of fry
 - use skimmed milk instead of full fat milk
 - be aware of hidden sources of fat e.g...pies, pastry etc.
 - remove all visible fat/skin from meat and poultry

- try to use low fat cheese and spreads
- eat less beef, lamb and pork which are high in fat

2) **Reduce the amount of sugar we consume**

About half the amount of sugar we take in is bought in bags and added to our food and drink. The rest is put into our food by manufacturers. So look out for other words for sugar, which are:

- glucose
- glucose syrup
- dextrose
- fructose
- galactose
- sucrose
- invert sugar
- maltodextrin

As well as reducing our calorie intake in the ways mentioned above, we should also aim to increase the amount of fibre we are taking in. This can be done in the following ways:

- eat more bread (especially wholemeal bread)
- eat more whole fibre cereals e.g...weetabix, porridge, muesli
- eat more pulses e.g... beans and sweetcorn
- eat more fresh fruit and vegetables

There is much more to food than just its calorie content. We require a well-balanced and broad range of foods to maintain energy, interest and above all, health.