



The Facts about Sugar and Gluten



Introduction

Sugar and Gluten, are two of the most discussed nutritional topics today but much confusion still exists. Could Sugar be the new cigarettes with respect to its effects on our long term health? Gluten, what is it, who needs to eliminate it from their diets? The World Health Organization has recently made sugar public health enemy number one. Gluten-free diets are all the rage. This newsletter will attempt to separate the fact from fiction and tell you what you need to know about each; the good, the bad and the ugly.

Sugar

Sugar goes by many names caramel, dextrose, glucose-fructose, corn syrup, fruit concentrate just to name a few. If you take the time to read the ingredient labels on the foods you eat at home you will find that sugar continually pops up in almost everything we eat and in unexpected amounts.

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) proposed new lower limits on the amount of sugar we consume. It is **recommending that sugar intake be no more than 5% of our daily calorie consumption.** For an average weight person this amounts to about **6 teaspoons or 25 grams of sugar a day.** Presently, Canada's Food Guide gives only vague advice, "eat less sugar" with respect to sugar intake but the U.S. Institute of Medicine, which Health Canada relies on for dietary reference, recommends no more than 25% of daily calories be from sugar.

To give you a perspective of the significance of WHO's new recommendations, a 100 gram fat-free, sweetened Greek yogurt has 13 g of sugar, 52 % of the new daily recommendation. That doesn't leave much room for anything else we may eat that may contain sugar, which unfortunately, almost everything we consume does.

Old habits are hard to break and for us to reduce our daily sugar consumption will be challenging. Most people make decisions about the food they buy and eat around cost, taste and convenience, which often leads us to buy processed and prepared foods rather than making meals from scratch. The time and energy to plan, shop and prepare healthy meals are often in short supply in our busy lives so the quality of our diet suffers and our sugar intake increases.

Monitor Your Sugar Intake

1. Read ingredient labels. Copy the following link to your browser and read an excellent article on how to read food ingredient labels.

<http://forever-active.com/understanding-the-nutrition-facts-label-on-your-food-items,understanding-the-nutrition-facts-label-on-your-food-items>

2. When reading food labels, use the following calculations to determine how much sugar you are ingesting daily;

1. Grams of sugar / 4 = Teaspoons of sugar (6 is your daily maximum)
2. Teaspoons of sugar x 4 = grams of sugar (no more than 25 grams per day)
3. Grams of sugar x 4 = calories from Sugar (no more than 5% of your daily calories should be from sugar)

Did You Know

WHO's new proposed guidelines apply to so-called free sugars that manufacturers, cooks and consumers add to food, as well as honey, syrup, fruit juices and fruit concentrate. They do not apply to sugars that occur naturally in whole fruits, vegetables and unsweetened dairy products.

Health Risk of High Sugar

Consumption

1. **Death from Heart Disease**— in a recently published article in the JAMA Internal Medicine the odds of dying from heart disease rose in tandem with the percentage of sugar in the diet—and that was true regardless of a person's age, sex, physical activity level, and body-mass index (a measure of weight).
2. **Weight gain and Obesity**— Extra sugar your body does not immediately require for energy is converted to fat that is stored predominantly around the waist in men and hips and thighs in women.
3. **Diabetes** - The more sugar you eat, the more fluctuations you will have in your blood sugar levels which puts you at risk for developing type 2 diabetes .
4. **Depressed Immune System**— eating sugar depresses our immune system by about 50 percent for up to five hours. If you eat sugar at every meal, it means that your immune system will be functioning at half-capacity for most of the day.
5. **Chronic Diseases** — too much sugar can result in elevated insulin levels and chronically high insulin levels are associated with an increased risk of some cancers, heart diseases, polycystic ovarian syndrome, acne and even myopia .

Gluten

What is Gluten

Gluten is a protein found in wheat, barley, rye and wheat-contaminated oats. Gluten gives elasticity to dough, helping it rise and keep its shape and often gives the final product a chewy texture. Gluten is used in cosmetics, hair products, and other dermatological preparations. About .5 to 1% people in North America have Gluten sensitivity or intolerance to gluten (Celiac Disease) . Labels for all food products sold in Canada must clearly identify the presence of gluten if it is present at a level greater than 10 ppm

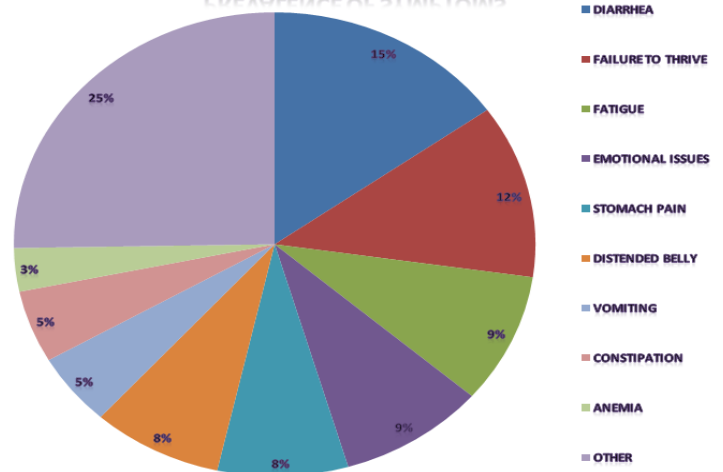


Celiac Disease

This is an autoimmune inflammatory reaction in the small intestine to eating gluten. Over time, the inflammation damages the small intestine's lining and prevents absorption of some essential micro nutrients. If not appropriately treated, chronic malabsorption may result, leading to bloating, diarrhea and weight loss. Eventually, the nervous system, skeletal system, and internal organs such as the liver can be adversely affected.

There's no cure for celiac disease but following a strict gluten-free diet can help manage symptoms. and promote intestinal healing.

PREVALENCE OF SYMPTOMS



Gluten Free Diet

This is a diet that excludes the protein gluten. Initially, following a gluten-free diet may be frustrating. But with time, patience and creativity, you'll find there are many foods that you already eat that are gluten-free and you will find substitutes for gluten-containing foods that you can enjoy. Most neighbourhood grocery stores sell a variety of gluten-free foods but specialty grocery stores will sell more of a variety of gluten-free foods.

Allowed Foods: Beans, seeds, nuts in their natural, unprocessed form, fresh eggs, fresh meats, fish and poultry (not breaded, batter-coated or marinated), fruits and vegetables, most dairy products. There are many grains and starches such as corn and cornmeal, flax, millet, quinoa, rice and soy that can be part of a gluten-free diet.

Avoid all food and drinks containing: barley (malt, malt flavoring and malt vinegar are usually made from barley), rye, triticale (a cross between wheat and rye), wheat. In general, avoid the following foods unless they're labeled as gluten-free: beer, breads, cakes and pies, candies, cereals, cookies and crackers, croutons, french fries, pastas, processed luncheon meats, salad dressings, sauces, seasoned rice mixes, seasoned snack foods, such as potato and tortilla chips, soups and soup bases. As well, be alert for products that may contain gluten such as food additives and medications and vitamins that use gluten as a binding agent.

Cross-contamination can occur at home if foods are prepared on common surfaces or with utensils that weren't thoroughly cleaned. Using a common toaster for gluten-free bread and regular bread is a major source of contamination. It is important to consider what steps you need to take to prevent cross-contamination at home.

Conclusion: If you are considering starting a gluten-free diet, it's a good idea to consult a dietitian who can answer your questions and offer advice about how to avoid gluten while still eating a healthy, balanced diet.