



## Parent/Faculty Article

### Too Many Spoons of Sugar

February is a month characterized by heart shaped boxes of chocolates. While we may find sweet flavored treats tasty, consuming a lot of added sugar can increase our risk of heart disease and stroke.

According to the American Heart Association (AHA) the recommended daily added sugar intake for women is 6 teaspoons (tsp) and for men 9 tsp. However the average adult consumes 13 to 16 more tsp of added sugar per day, bringing intake to a grand total of 22 tsp or 350 calories. While there isn't a specific tsp recommendation for kids, their average intake ranges from 23 tsp to 34 tsp or 370 to 545 non-nutritive calories per day!

It's important to clarify that added sugar is the issue, not natural sugar. Natural sugar is the sugar that's naturally present in foods like fresh fruit and plain milk. Added sugar is the sugar added during processing, preparation or at the table like granulated sugar, brown sugar, corn syrup, honey, malt syrup or molasses.

High intake of added sugar is linked to heart disease, high blood pressure and high triglycerides. It also leads to weight gain and/or displaces nutrients essential to a healthy diet and heart. So what can you do to cut back on added sugar?

**First**, identify the main sources of added sugar in your diet. Soft drinks, sugar-sweetened beverages (i.e. fruit punch), sweetened cereals and snacks (i.e. cookies) are where you'll find large amounts.

**Second**, try to eat whole, unprocessed foods like fresh fruit and vegetables, whole grains and plain low-fat or non-fat dairy products. These foods do

not contain added sugar, only natural sugar.

**Third**, read labels and ingredient lists. Be suspicious of any product that contains more than 4 grams of sugar per serving; 1 tsp is equal to 4 grams. Review the ingredient list for sugar or "sugar sounding" words. If these words are the first, second and/or third ingredient, or are sprinkled throughout the ingredient list, then consider moving to another product.

**Quick Tip:** Any sugar noted in the Nutrition Facts label of unsweetened canned, dried or frozen fruit, 100% fruit juice or plain dairy products like milk or yogurt is natural sugar not added sugar.

## Student Article

### A Sugar Detective

Do you know you should only eat small amounts of added sugar each day? And do you know that soft drinks and sugar-sweetened beverages like fruit punch may be the biggest source of added sugar in your diet?

Check out this example. A 12 fluid ounce (fl oz) can of regular soda has about 10 tsp of added sugar, which looks like 10 packets of sugar or 10 sugar cubes. It's kind of easy to figure out the amount of added sugar in a soft drink because it's pretty much just water and sugar.

But how do you find out the amounts of added sugar in other foods that have lots of ingredients like cereals, cookies or fruit drinks? It takes some detective work since there are two kinds of sugar in food - natural sugar and added sugar.

Let's start by investigating the difference between natural sugar and added sugar. Natural sugar is found in foods like white milk, plain yogurt, fresh



fruit and 100% fruit juice. This kind of sugar is good for your body and these foods are packaged with other healthy nutrients like calcium, vitamin D, vitamin C and potassium. Added sugar is the sugar added to foods or drinks like cookies or fruit punch. It doesn't contain any good nutrients to help you build a strong body.

How can you identify added sugar in foods or drinks? Start by reading ingredient lists. Look for words like: brown sugar, corn syrup, honey, malt syrup, molasses, sucrose and sugar. These are all types of added sugar.

Now put your detective skills to work. Investigate the ingredient list below, which was taken from on a cereal box. Circle all the suspicious added sugar words and count how many you find. Does it seem like a lot?

Whole grain oats, whole grain wheat, brown sugar, almond pieces, sugar, crisp oats (which contain sugar), corn syrup, barley malt extract, potassium citrate, toasted oats (which contain sugar, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, and brown sugar, molasses), salt, malt syrup, wheat bits (which contain sugar), honey, and cinnamon.

Here's another investigative tip: locate where in the lineup an added sugar ingredient falls. If it's the first, second and/or third ingredient, then chances are that food or drink contains greater amounts of added sugar. Where does the first added sugar word fall in the example above? What does that tell you about this cereal?

## Food Committee Idea of the Month

### Added Sugar for Thought

Visuals are a great way for people to grasp complicated concepts, like added sugar in foods and drinks. Think about putting added sugar on display. Take common foods and beverages and showcase the amount of added sugar they contain per common portion size.

You can do this with tsp of sugar, sugar packets or sugar cubes. One tsp of sugar is equal to 4 grams of sugar, 1 sugar packet or 1 sugar cube. Here are some suggested items to display. Set them out with their corresponding sugar amount on the side.

<b>Beverages</b>	<b>Tsp added sugar</b>
16 fl oz bottled Water	0 tsp
1 cup Low-fat Milk*	0 tsp
1 cup 100% Orange Juice*	0 tsp
1 cup Chocolate Milk	3 tsp
20 fl oz bottle Fruit Punch	16 ¼ tsp
20 fl oz bottle Cola	16 ½ tsp
20 fl oz bottle Sports Drink	8 ¾ tsp

  

<b>Foods</b>	<b>Tsp added sugar</b>
6 oz cup Plain Yogurt*	0 tsp
6 oz cup Vanilla Yogurt	3 ¼ tsp
1 cup Cheerios	¼ tsp
1 cup Honey Nut Cheerios	3 tsp

\* It is important to note that while plain milk, 100% fruit juice and plain yogurt have sugar listed on the Nutrition Facts label, they don't have added sugar. The sugar in these products is natural sugar which is different than the added sugar found in items like soda.