

From the Nutritionist

Andrea Hart, RDN, CDN



From the Nutritionist... Following the Dietary Guidelines part 3: Limit Sugar Intake

Americans like sugar. And we like it a lot. The average American adult consumes 22 teaspoons of added sugar per day, and the average child in the US consumes even more, at about 32 teaspoons per day. Foods containing naturally occurring sugars, such as fresh fruits and milk, provide the body with essential nutrients like vitamins, minerals, and fiber. On the other hand, added sugars, which are those not naturally found in a food, provide “Empty Calories,” which are Calories without any additional nutrients. Although we all need Calories for energy, a high intake of empty Calories puts people at risk of becoming overweight or obese. Beyond that, excessive sugar intake has been linked with a number of health conditions, including acne, depression, diabetes, fatigue, gout,

headaches, heart attack, high blood pressure, and hypoglycemia.

This has caused a number of health organizations to make recommendations about sugar intake. The current Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend that Americans consume fewer foods with added sugars, and the new guidelines, which are due to be released later this year, are likely to encourage more specific restrictions on sugar intake. A number of health organizations currently recommend that men consume no more than 9 teaspoons (36 grams) of sugar per day, and women consume no more than 6 teaspoons (24 grams) per day. If you are one of the many people consuming more sugar than you should, here are some tips to help you cut down:

- Be a sugar sleuth. Look for it on food labels by one of its many names, such as corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, malt syrup, cane sugar, brown sugar, and evaporated cane juice.
- Cut back on the amount of sugar you add to things you eat and drink regularly – including table sugar, maple syrup, and honey – these all count as added sugars, even if they are “natural.”
- Many seemingly healthful foods, like granola bars and yogurt, are often loaded with sugar. Compare brands and choose those containing less.
- Make sugary foods like muffins, cookies, and ice cream a treat, not part of your everyday diet. Most days choose fruit for dessert, which is naturally sweet and loaded with nutrients. The body recognizes naturally occurring sugar differently from added sugars.
- People who have consumed a sugary beverage generally don’t feel as full as if they had eaten the same amount of Calories from solid food – this may lead to an excessive total Calorie intake. Limit your intake of regular soda, lemonade, energy drinks, sweetened tea and coffee drinks, and even sports drinks.
- Most of the time, choose drinks free of added sugars like water, milk, unsweetened iced tea, water infused with fruit or vegetables (such as cucumbers or citrus fruit), or flavored water without added sweeteners.
- If you eat canned fruit packed in syrup, drain and rinse the fruit before consuming. Better yet, choose fruit canned in water or juice instead of syrup.
- When baking, cut the sugar in the recipe by one third to one half. Add more flavor if desired, with vanilla, almond, or orange extract, or with spices like cinnamon or nutmeg.

Andrea Hart, registered dietitian nutritionist and New York State-certified dietitian/nutritionist, is available for free, confidential, one-on-one counseling and as a speaker or facilitator for campus groups, panels or classes.

Contact Andrea: andrea.hart@cortland.edu or call 607-753-5773 with questions or to set up an appointment. Or stop by her office, first floor, Neubig Hall, across from the Neubig Dining cashier.