

Straight Talk on Diabetes and Sugar Consumption

The CDC reported that in 2014 there were 29 million Americans with diabetes and another 50 million with pre-diabetes. This is an epidemic that is caused in large part by sugars added unnecessarily to our foods. Added sugar also increases the risk of heart disease, stroke, and cancer. This growing epidemic has the potential to derail our health care system and it is **largely preventable!**

Sugar is added to many of the foods we eat daily. Examples include applesauce, bread, cereal, chips, ketchup, soft drinks and yogurt, to name a few. The average American eats 130 pounds of sugar annually, really 130 pounds! Most of the sugar is added gratuitously to food with no nutritional benefit. With all of that sugar it is no wonder there is an epidemic of diabetes in this country.

Sugar sweetened beverages are some of the worst offenders. A single 12-ounce can of can of cola contains 42 grams of sugar, 160 calories. A whopping 10 teaspoons of sugar per can! It does not stop there, in a typical breakfast cereal or pop tart there is 20 – 40 grams of sugar, or 5 to 10 teaspoons. This is much too much sugar for a child, or an adult.

The American Heart Association recommends less than 30 grams of added sugar in an entire day. The typical American eats more than 200 grams daily. Sugars that are naturally found in fruits and vegetables are not the problem.

Sugar is a major cause of diabetes. Reducing it would prevent many of the future cases of diabetes. This was clearly demonstrated by Dr. Lustig, a pediatric diabetes specialist, who restored normal blood sugar control in children with pre-diabetes by eliminating all foods with added sugars in their diets. The children ate the same amount calories but no food with added sugar. Their pre-diabetes reversed completely in 10 days! Sadly,

children frequently develop type II diabetes, a disease previously thought to occur only in adults. For more information on the danger of added sugars see Dr. Lustig's interview on 60 Minutes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pxG3YiBMMZE>

How can we prevent diabetes in our lives and in our children's lives? Start by reading labels. The ingredients section will list the added sugars. Beware though that sugar can be hard to recognize. The food industry disguises it by using more than 50 different aliases for sugar. A few examples include cane sugar, cane syrup, glucose, high fructose corn syrup, dextran, concentrated fruit juice, agave nectar, and sucrose.

When selecting a product like applesauce, breakfast cereal, salad dressing, peanut butter, or pizza sauce, read the labels and choose one with little or no added sugars. Typically for most product categories there are delicious options that are low in added sugar. Do we really need added sugar in peanut butter and pizza sauce anyway?

Once a person has type II diabetes it is more challenging to treat it with diet and exercise. It remains quite possible though. It starts by eliminating added sugars. Next reduce carbohydrates to 50 - 75 grams per day. Carbohydrates in the form of breads, bagels, cereals, crackers, pasta, sweet fruits, and fruit juices are problematic for diabetics, raising blood sugar substantially. These foods are best avoided in diabetics.

The American Diabetic Association recommends 40 or more grams of carbohydrates per meal, the equivalent of 10 teaspoons of sugar. Many health researchers believe this recommendation is behind the times. It senselessly raises blood sugar and does not address the root of the diabetic problem – the inability to tolerate sugar and carbohydrates in the diet. For more information on this topic please see this terrific you-tube video from Purdue University on

naturally reversing type II diabetes with a low carbohydrate diet:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=da1vvigy5tQ>

The primary foods to eat on a low carbohydrate diet are vegetables, berries, oils, nuts, meats, and fish. Avoid added sugars and the carbohydrates listed above. There are resources on the Internet as well as smart phone applications that provide information needed to determine the carbohydrate content of foods. I recommend the following sites:

- Website – <http://nutritiondata.self.com/>
- Website and smart phone application – <https://www.myfitnesspal.com/>

The following are a couple of other practices that help diabetics keep blood sugars down. The first is walking 10 minutes after eating. Walking stimulates the rapid uptake and storage of glucose in muscle. This effect is so powerful that it decreases the rise in blood sugar after eating up to 50%. That is an amazing benefit for 10 minutes of walking!

The second practice is using apple cider vinegar to inhibit glucose absorption from the gastrointestinal tract. To do this mix 1 tablespoon of apple cider vinegar in 4 ounces of water, and possibly a small amount of honey for taste, then drink it with your meal. Apple cider vinegar appreciably decreases blood sugar spikes after eating!

The epidemic in diabetes is the unfortunate end product of modern society, processed foods, and excessive added dietary sugars. Diabetes increases the risk of many diseases including heart attack, stroke, and cancer. The toll of this epidemic is enormous and it is **largely preventable**. Prevention begins with reading labels and avoiding added sugar!

