

NUTRITION SNACKS SUGAR

When people think of sugar, they think of table sugar which is called sucrose. But there are many types of sugars and some occur naturally such as fructose in fruits and starchy vegetables, and lactose in dairy foods.

Sugars can also be added to foods as they help improve taste, create texture and colour and sometimes for preservation.

To know whether a product has added sugar, look on the ingredient list for any word ending in 'ose', so sucrose, glucose and so on. The sugar in honey, maple syrups and fruit juice are also considered added sugars.

Because sugar is a form of carbohydrate it provides the body with energy and this is true whether the sugar is added or natural.

SUGAR AND HEALTH

There has been a lot of research into sugar and its impact on health. Much of this research has been done with sugar sweetened beverages such as soft drinks and the main finding was that there is good evidence added sugars can increase tooth decay.

The research didn't find a strong link between added sugars and other health conditions although there is some evidence saying it's probable that high intakes of sugar sweetened drinks may have a negative impact particularly on heart health.

Based on these findings, the current recommendations from the World Health Organisation are to limit added sugars to less than 10% of total energy. And the Australian and New Zealand guidelines both recommend limiting the amounts of food with added sugars. In other words, a little bit of added sugar can be included in an otherwise balanced diet but don't have too much.

SUGAR AND JENNY CRAIG

So, with all that in mind, how does sugar fit into the Jenny Craig program?

You may have some members say that they want to cut out sugar or avoid eating sugar altogether. And while reducing added sugar is a good thing, at Jenny Craig we want to help our members develop more realistic eating habits.

Our aim is to help our members develop a positive relationship with food by not eliminating food groups, and instead promoting an 'everything in moderation' approach as this is more sustainable for them in the long term. Our foods have some added sugar in them to help with taste, balance flavours and provide our members with some treat items so they don't feel like they are missing out. However, we work closely with our suppliers to keep the added sugar to a minimum.

SUGAR AND WEIGHT GAIN

We've mentioned in previous videos that no one food or nutrient causes weight gain or enhances weight loss and this is true of sugar also. The problem for sugar occurs because many foods that are high in sugar are easy to eat and don't give us much else nutritionally. So, think of things like lollies or soft drinks. When we have too much of these foods, it can lead to high energy intakes and weight gain. This is particularly true for soft drinks, in fact, the research on soft drinks does show a link between high intakes of sugar sweetened drinks and weight gain.

In other words, it's not the sugar causing weight gain but the amount of energy from eating too many of what they call discretionary foods.

Also, our menus are made up of a wide variety of whole foods including fruits, veggies and grains and because of this variety, our menus naturally minimize the amount of added sugar. For this reason, our members can enjoy a sweet treat as part of their nutritionally balanced menu plan, it's all about portion size and balance.

However, we appreciate that every member has unique preferences and if they prefer to avoid sweet snacks or the sweeter breakfast items, they can certainly do this. Each choice category for snacks and breakfasts have exchange options that include both sweet and savoury options so you can help them exchange their sweet items for a savoury.

KEY MESSAGES

- 1 Sugar is a carbohydrate and provides energy.
- 2 Be aware of natural vs added sugar.
- 3 Sugar on its own doesn't cause weight gain and small amounts can be included in a balanced meal plan.
- 4 Members don't need to worry about sugar when sticking to the Jenny Craig program as it is kept to a minimum with all foods balanced across the day.

REFERENCES

- 1 World Health Organisation. (2015). Guideline: Sugars intake for adults and children. Geneva.
- 2 National Health and Medical Research Council. (2015). Australian Dietary Guidelines. www.eatforhealth.gov.au
- 3 Ministry of Health. (2015). Eating and Activity Guidelines for New Zealand Adults. Wellington.