



Nutrition for Dental Health : Sugar

In 2015, the World Health Organisation adjusted their sugar guidelines to state that daily intake of free sugars should be **less than 10% of total energy intake**. For the average adult this would mean around 50g, or 12 teaspoons of sugar per day. They go on to recommend that if possible, this should be cut in half again to just **5% of total energy intake**, to better prevent against diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and cancers.

What are 'Free Sugars'?

This recommendation is based on intake of added 'free' sugar products. Free sugars are included in most packaged products you pick up in the supermarket and can hide under a number of different names, meaning often we are unaware of how much sugar is really in the product.

The following are just some of the most common names for free sugars found on ingredients lists:

Sucrose, Maltose, Dextrose, Fructose, Glucose, Galactose, Lactose, High fructose corn syrup, Glucose solids, Cane juice, Dextrin, Maltodextrin, Dextran, Barley malt, Corn syrup, Caramel, Buttered syrup, Carob syrup, Malt syrup, Diatase, Diastatic malt, Fruit juice, Golden syrup, Turbinado, Sorghum syrup, Refiner's syrup, Ethyl maltol, Maple syrup ... and of course anything with 'sugar' in its name.



How much sugar is that really?

It's difficult to know what the guidance means in real terms, however you can use the guide below to estimate how much sugar is in a few of the most popular snack foods and drinks (on average).



• 330ml can of Full Fat Carbonated Beverage:
8-12 teaspoons



• Regular size chocolate bar:
7-10 teaspoons



• 200ml Orange or Apple Juice (from concentrate):
5 teaspoons



• 1 jam doughnut:
4 teaspoons



• 200ml diluted 'squash' drink:
4 teaspoons

One teaspoon of sugar is equivalent to approximately 4g.

But what about fruit?

Fresh fruit does contain sugar (mainly fructose), but it is not 'added' as it occurs naturally in the product. Because of this fresh fruit does not count as part of the WHO's guidelines for free sugars, however it's important to remember that too much fructose, even from fresh fruit, can have a negative effect on our bodies, such as bloating or other digestive issues. Fresh fruit should be consumed as part of your diet in healthy moderation along with plenty of fresh vegetables.



Top Tips

- Drink Water instead of juice or carbonated drinks.
- Don't add sugar to your tea or coffee – if you can't live without your sweet hit try a non-sugar sweetener instead.
- If a food item contains sugar within the first 3 ingredients, or has more than one type of sugar listed, avoid it if you can.



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