



Cut back on sugar, high-fructose or not

I keep hearing different things about high-fructose corn syrup. Some people say it's a lot worse than sugar, and others say it's just the same. Who's right?

You're seeing different viewpoints on this issue probably because research on high-fructose corn syrup is continuing to emerge. With each published study comes more commentary on both sides.

The problem is that some studies indicate that the body handles high-fructose corn syrup differently than it handles sucrose, but other studies haven't found such differences. As a result, different scientists have different opinions on the issue.

High-fructose corn syrup, or HFCS, is under the spotlight partly because it's so ubiquitous in processed foods. But most people are surprised to learn how similar HFCS is to sucrose. Sucrose, the kind of sugar in your sugar bowl — and the type that occurs naturally in fruits and vegetables — is composed of approximately equal parts of fructose and glucose.

High-fructose corn syrup is also a mixture of fructose and glucose, with the proportions often depending on its use. Pure corn syrup is almost all glucose, but HFCS made for use in baked goods usually contains about 42 percent fructose. HFCS used in beverages usually has about 55 percent fructose.

In a 2012 position paper on sweeteners, the Academy of Nutrition

and Dietetics reviewed research from the previous decade that looked for links between consuming HCFS and obesity or other adverse effects in adults. The analysis determined that, overall, studies offered little evidence that HFCS differed from sucrose in such effects. But the analysis did suggest, because the studies were small and of short duration, that more studies are needed for more definitive conclusions.

Still, don't let that stop you from taking action. The fact is, if you're like most people, you'd probably do well to reduce the amount of any added sugar in your diet.

Most Americans consume more than 350 calories of added sugars a day — that's the type of sugar in soft drinks, cookies, candy, pastries, soft drinks and ice cream. It doesn't include naturally occurring sugars, such as those in milk and fruit that are accompanied by all sorts of "good-for-you" nutrients.

To find added sugars, look at the ingredients listings on food labels. You'll have to do some detective work, because added sugar goes by many names. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics offers a list of what to look for at <http://bit.ly/addedsugarlist>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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