Do You Know How Much Sugar You Are Eating?

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The taste of sugar is something we are born loving and most of us never outgrow our desire for sweets. While there is nothing wrong with eating sweets in moderation, too much can have a negative impact on health.

A recommendation by the American Heart Association is that adult men should consume no more than 150 calories and women no more than 100 calories of added sugar per day. This would amount to no more than 9 teaspoons and 6 teaspoons respectively. To put this in perspective, a can of soda has about 10 teaspoons of sugar.

The reason the American Heart Association has recommended the restriction of sugar is because studies have indicated that with increased sugar intake there is increased risk for cardiovascular disease. We also know that high intakes of sugar contributes to overweight and obesity and being overweight contributes to a variety of chronic conditions such as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Food labels list sugars with the number of grams per serving that the food provides. To translate that to teaspoons, there are approximately four grams of sugar in one teaspoon.

It is important to know that the food label does not distinguish between added sugar and natural sugar so you have to dig a little deeper to get an indicator of added sugars. Look down at the ingredient list. Some words that indicate added sugars include: sucrose, honey, high fructose corn syrup, dehydrated cane juice, invert sugar, and generally words that end in “ose”.

We don’t worry as much about natural sugars in foods because of the nutritional value of the foods they are in. Examples include lactose which is the sugar in milk and fructose, the sugar in fruit.

Watch for Hidden Added Sugar

Dessert foods such as cookies, cake, and brownies add sugar to the diet but there are many other sources. Sugar in drinks makes up a lot of the overall consumption of added sugar in the diet. There is a surprising amount of added sugar in prepared foods such as ketchup, spaghetti sauce and even peanut butter.

2 Tablespoons of peanut butter has 3 grams of sugar accounting for 12 of the 180 calories.
1 Tablespoon of ketchup has 4 grams of sugar accounting for 16 of the 20 calories.
½ cup of spaghetti sauce has 4 grams of sugar accounting for 16 of the 70 calories.

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