



Be a Sugar Detective

Myth: All sugar is evil; I should only buy foods without any sugar

Answer: Many healthy foods contain natural sugars, but it's best to avoid excess added sugars

More and more research points to the dangers of a diet high in sugar. High-sugar diets are associated with obesity, diabetes, heart disease, and many other ills. So does that make the ideal diet one without any sugar? No, since many healthy foods contain natural sugars.

Apples, peaches, pears and all other fruits contain sugar, but the sugar you consume when you eat fruits “earns its way” by bringing along all kinds of useful vitamins, minerals and fiber. Vegetables also contain natural sugars: they’re found in everything from beets to beans, carrots to corn, and pumpkins to peppers, though generally at lower levels than in fruits. Even milk has natural sugars, but they partner with calcium, protein and other nutrients that contribute to health. We don’t need to avoid any of these sugars.

Added sugars are another matter. Although they’re digested the same as natural sugars, they bring nothing worthwhile to the nutrition party, and filling up with added sugars can crowd out healthier foods. The result? We get excess calories, before we get all the nutrients our bodies need.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Americans got about 13% of their calories from added sugars between 2005 and 2010. Soon, it’s likely that added sugars will be detailed separately on the Nutrition Facts Panel of foods. Until then, however, a few tips can help you find – and avoid – excess added sugars in your foods.

Check the Ingredient List

Natural sugars like those found in fruits, vegetables and milk don’t appear on the ingredient list; added sugar does. Added sugar comes in many forms. There are the familiar ones, like sugar, brown sugar, honey, maple syrup, and molasses – and many others. All these words are added sugars, too:

- agave
- cane juice
- corn syrup
- dextrose, dextrin
- fructose
- glucose
- high-fructose corn syrup
- malt syrup
- maltodextrin
- maltose
- raw sugar
- rice syrup
- sucrose
- sugar alcohol
- xylitol, xylose



Look for Fruit Ingredients

You’re looking at two cereals, both with 8 grams of sugar. One has both raisins and sugar in the ingredient list, and the other has only sugar in its ingredients. Which one has more added sugar? The one without the raisins. If each serving of the raisin cereal contains about 15 raisins, then the natural sugar in the cereal would account for about half its sugar.



Look for Dairy Ingredients

You're trying to choose between two yogurts. The plain one has 9 grams of sugar, while the vanilla one has 22 grams of sugar. How much added sugar is in each one? The ingredient list tells us the plain one has no added sugar, so the 9 grams is the natural sugar in the milk the yogurt's made from. Now we know the vanilla one has 9 grams of natural sugar and 12 grams of added sugar. Buy plain, and add your own flavorings!

Divide by 4

Have trouble picturing whether 12 grams of sugar is a little or a lot? A teaspoon of sugar is 4 grams of sugar, so just divide by 4. This means 12 grams of sugar is 3 teaspoons. Do you really need to eat 3 teaspoons of sugar in that little container of yogurt – or in a bowl of breakfast cereal? Be a smart sugar detective!





1) Learn to be a Sugar Detective

With this game you can remind shoppers that all sugars are not created equal and they'll learn to identify natural and added sugars in their favorite products.

What's needed:

Gather some props, such as a magnifying glass, a bowl with fruit and veggies, or glass of milk (or an empty carton of milk).

For demonstration purposes, round up several popular styles of yogurt (i.e., plain, flavored, fruit-on-the-bottom; if necessary the containers can be empty) with varying sugar content; they can be one brand or several, but make sure the serving size is the same for each yogurt.

Print

Print out the accompanying handout, **Be A Sugar Detective** to distribute after your demonstration. Print out the accompanying sign "**Learn to be A Sugar Detective**" and place in a sign holder.

How to play:

Gather folks around a table with your display and yogurt samples.

Using the handout as a guide, explain the difference between natural sugar derived from fruits, vegetables and milk versus added sugar found in many processed foods.

To demonstrate how to determine what's natural sugar and what's added sugar in a product ask several people to choose a yogurt container and take turns reading aloud how much sugar is listed on the Nutrition Facts label, and then have them read the ingredient list aloud.

Ask players if they can determine what's natural sugar (and why) and what's added sugar (and why).

For this example we're using Stonyfield brand yogurt (6-ounce servings) to demonstrate how the sugar is broken down into added sugar and natural sugar.

- **Plain has 9g sugar.**
Answer: All natural lactose – ingredients show no added sugar.
- **Peach has 21g sugar.**
Answer: Includes 9g natural sugar from milk and about 12g other sugar split between fruit and added sugar. Contains at least 7g added sugar (more than half of the 12g, as the sugar comes before the peaches which provide natural sugar).
- **French Vanilla has 22g sugar**
Answer: this would be about 9g natural sugar and 13g added sugar.
- **Chocolate Underground has 35g sugar.**
Answer: This includes 9g natural sugar from milk (lactose) and a whopping 24g (six teaspoons!) of added sugar.

Explain that 4 grams of sugar is one teaspoon. To figure how much sugar there is in a serving, divide by 4.



2) How Many Teaspoons of Sugar?

It's a useful skill to convert grams of sugar on a package to the teaspoons we can picture. Moms might not freak out when their kid's cereal has 12g of sugar – but they wouldn't be happy to see their child put three teaspoons of sugar in their bowl.

What's Needed:

Granulated sugar, a teaspoon and several small bowls of different sizes.

Assemble a range of items that contain sugar, both natural and added. Some examples could include:

Natural Sugar

- A carrot (medium size)(3g)—doesn't have a label, but put one on it!
- An orange (12g) – doesn't have a label, but put one on it!
- Plain yogurt (about 9g per 6-ounce or 12g per 8-ounce serving)
- Orange juice (45g per 15.2 fluid ounce bottle Odwalla) or carrot juice (22g per 15.2 fluid ounce bottle Odwalla)

- Unsweetened applesauce (4 ounce serving has 8g of sugar)

Added Sugar

- Oats n Dark Chocolate granola bar (12g)
- Kellogg's Honey Smacks (15g per $\frac{3}{4}$ cup serving)
- Skittles (2.17 ounce package) (42g)
- 20-ounce Coke (65g)

Print

Print out the accompanying handout, **Be A Sugar Detective** to distribute after your demonstration. Print out the accompanying sign “**How Many Teaspoons of Sugar?**” and place in a sign holder.

How to Play:

Put the Added Sugar products on one side and the Natural Sugar ones on the other side, along with the bowls, teaspoon and granulated sugar.

Gather shoppers around your table. Mention that sugar comes naturally with other useful nutrients, but sometimes it's simply added to foods. Use the handout **Be a Sugar Detective** as a guide.

Ask players if they know or can guess how much sugar is in several of the products. Then ask several players to choose a product and take turns reading the sugar amount on the Nutrition Facts label to the group.

Explain that 4 grams of sugar equals one teaspoon; to convert grams of sugar into teaspoons of sugar they simply have to divide by 4. Have the players do the math.

For several of the examples, as the amount of sugar in teaspoons is identified, ask another shopper to measure out the amount of teaspoon(s) of sugar into a bowl. This will help the shopper visualize how much sugar is actually in the product. (They may be surprised!)



LEARN TO BE A SUGAR DETECTIVE

Did you know
there's a difference
between **naturally-**
occurring sugar
in foods and
added sugar?

*Play along with us
to learn more.*

HOW MANY TEASPOONS OF SUGAR?

Do you know how many
teaspoons there are in
a gram of sugar?



How many teaspoons
of sugar in your
favorite yogurt?

You might be surprised!
Play with us and find out!