

Nutrition News

Department of Human Nutrition



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Reduce Added Sugar for Better Health

In the 1964 movie, Mary Poppins sang “A spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down.” If that were today, Mary would have just used up one sixth of her quota for daily added sugar, according to the latest recommendations from “A Scientific Statement from the American Heart Association” (AHA) released August 24, 2009.

The statement suggests that the majority of women should consume no more than 100 calories of added sugars (e.g., table sugar, honey, syrups, etc.) per day. This amounts to a little more than six teaspoons— less than the sugar in a can of soda, which often has eight teaspoons or more of added sugar! The maximum recommendation for most men is approximately 150 calories of added sugar per day, or approximately nine teaspoons.* The average American consumes about 22 teaspoons of added sugar a day, or 352 calories. The key word is “added” sugar. This advice does not include sugars that are naturally part of many foods, particularly fruits.

What prompted these recommendations? There is growing evidence of the association between excess sugar consumption and a number of health conditions— obesity, hypertension, elevated triglycerides and other markers for heart disease. American diets high in added sugar are often low in essential nutrients.

USDA’s MyPyramid provides a chart for estimating suggested amounts of “discretionary” calories at http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/discretionary_calories_amount_table.html. These are calories above what is needed to keep the body functioning, and they provide energy for physical activity which varies depending on age, sex and activity level. For women consuming 2000 calories, discretionary calories are estimated at 265 calories. *It is recommended that we consume no more than half of our discretionary calories from added sugar.* The lead author of the Scientific Statement from the AHA, Rachael K. Johnson,

recommends individuals use added sugars as *flavor enhancers* (e.g., flavored yogurt or sweetened whole grain cereals rather than nutrient-empty candy and sodas).

What does the AHA position mean for the consumer?

Our food industry provides us with a generous variety of sugary foods from which to choose. Unfortunately, the *Nutrition Facts* labels on processed foods provide information on “total” sugars and do not differentiate between added sugar and natural sugar. To see if there is “added” sugar we need to go one step further and examine the “*ingredients*” list. Even then, the amount of added sugar is still not evident. It is still acceptable for a modern day Mary Poppins to offer a spoonful of sugar or indulge in an occasional soft drink or cookie. It is also true that a little sugar often enhances the palatability of more nutritious foods.

(continued on page 2)

So enjoy a teaspoon of sugar in your cup of tea or a little honey on your morning oatmeal. And of course for the most healthful sweet treat of all—enjoy several servings of nutritious “added - sugar free” fruit everyday!

Recommendation: Consume no more than half of discretionary calories from added sugar.

1 teaspoon of sugar=4 grams.

1 gram=4 calories.

4 grams x 4 calories=16 calories

1 teaspoon of sugar=16 calories

***A general guide for estimating “discretionary calories” by age and sex:**

Excerpted from MyPyramid.gov:

Age and sex	Not physically active		Physically active		Estimated “added” sugar calorie/gram allowance
	Estimated total calorie need	Estimated discretionary calorie allowance	Estimated total calorie need	Estimated discretionary calorie allowance	
Children 2-3 years old	1000 calories	165	1000-1400 calories	165 to 170	82-85 (20g)
Children 4-8 years old	1200-1400 calories	170	1400-1800 calories	170-195	85-98 (20-24g)
Girls 9-13 years old	1600 calories	130	1600-2200 calories	130 to 290	65-145 (16-36g)
Boys 9-13 years old	1800 calories	195	1800-2600 calories	195 to 410	98-205 (24-52g)
Girls 14-18 years old	1800 calories	195	2000-2400 calories	265 to 360	132-180 (32-44g)
Boys 14-18 years old	2200 calories	290	2400-3200 calories	360 to 650	180-325 (44--80g)
Females 19-30 years old	2000 calories	265	2000-2400 calories	265 to 360	132-180 (32-44g)
Males 19-30 years old	2400 calories	360	2600-3000 calories	410 to 510	205-255 (52-64g)
Females 31-50 years old	1800 calories	195	2000-2200 calories	265 to 290	132-145 (32-36g)
Males 31-50 years old	2200 calories	290	2400-3000 calories	360 to 510	180-255 (44-64g)
Females 51+ years old	1600 calories	130	1800-2200 calories	195 to 290	98-145 (24-36g)
Males 51+ years old	2000 calories	265	2200-2800 calories	290 to 425	145-212 (36-52g)

Sources:

Dietary Sugars Intake and Cardiovascular Health: A Scientific Statement From the American Heart Association. *Circulation*, Sep 2009; 120: 1011 - 1020.

U.S. Department of Agriculture. MyPyramid.gov Website. Washington, DC. Discretionary Calories. http://www.mypyramid.gov/pyramid/discretionary_calories_amount_table.html. Accessed October 15, 2009.

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call toll-free 1-888-369-4777. Contents of this publication may be freely reproduced for educational purposes. All other rights reserved. In each case, credit **Karen Hudson**, MEd, RD, LD, Family Nutrition Program Coordinator, Department of Human Nutrition; Kansas State University; *Reduce Added Sugar for Better Health*; November, 2009. K-State Research and Extension is a short name for the Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, a program designed to generate and distribute useful knowledge for the well-being of Kansans. Supported by county, state, federal and private funds, the program has county Extension offices, experiment fields, area Extension offices and regional research centers statewide. Its headquarters is on the K-State campus, Manhattan. Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned. **Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, Kansas.** Kansas State University is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Kansas State University, County Extension Councils, Extension Districts, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating.