

Sugar

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This simple carbohydrate has been in the press a lot recently for its disease-related impact

Sugars are simple carbohydrates which our body breaks down to provide an instant source of energy. Diets high in sugar can increase the risk of tooth decay and the number of calories in our diet which can lead to weight gain. Diets high in sugary drinks have been associated with an increased risk of weight gain and type 2 diabetes, so try to choose versions with no added sugar where possible.

Sources

Sugars can be added to foods, commonly in the form of cane sugar, honey, syrups and nectars, and are naturally present in some foods such as milk, milk products, fruits and vegetables. Both naturally present and added sugars are processed in the same way by our bodies and provide the same number of calories per gram.

Foods high in added sugar include: sweets, chocolate, cake, biscuits, fizzy drinks and desserts.

Foods naturally high in sugar include fruit juices, fruit smoothies, honey and syrups.

How much?

The amount of sugar in our diets has been falling but it's still too high, particularly for children and teenagers. Government advice recommends reducing the amount of 'free sugars' in our diet which includes foods with added sugars as well as fruit juices and smoothies which are naturally high in sugar. Sugars naturally present in dairy products and whole fruit and veg do not count. Try to stick to the below free sugar recommendations:

- Children 4-6yrs: less than 19g/day.
- Children 7-10yrs: less than 24g/day.
- Adults and children 11+: less than 30g/day.

How to reduce your sugar intake

Nutritional labelling on food and drinks can only label total sugar – this includes added sugars and naturally occurring sugars. You can help to reduce the amount of free sugars in your diet by following the below recommendations:

- Enjoy foods typically high in added sugars as a treat and in small amounts e.g. sweets, cakes, biscuits and chocolate.
- Choose no added-sugar soft drinks rather than the full sugar versions.
- Remember fruit juices and smoothies are naturally high in fruit sugars so mix these with water and enjoy no more than 150ml a day.

Dried fruits are also naturally high in sugar and can stick to your teeth, potentially impacting your dental health. Enjoy these foods as part of a meal rather than on their own. One portion of dried fruit is about 30g.

At M&S, we focus on reducing calories as opposed to focusing on one specific nutrient. Our activity on reducing calories, saturated fat, salt and added sugar as well as boosting fibre and other positive nutrients and removing artificial colours and trans-fat is on the premise that we won't compromise on the quality or safety of our food offer. From 2018 to 2019, we have reduced total calories per pack by 12%, total Saturated Fat per pack has reduced by 14% and total sugar per pack has reduced by 13%. The specific category data is attached. We believe the future needs in this area is reformulation around portion size whether that be clarity on size, resealable packaging or smaller versions of indulgent foods.
