
Avoiding Sugar

How to eliminate this sneaky dietary poison

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Avoiding Sugar

Sugar causes a variety of adverse reactions in the human body. Any form of sugar or concentrated sweetener can be problematic, especially in the doses we get nowadays. Common reasons why sugar is an issue and therefore addressed in a Functional Medicine practice:

- Concentrated sweeteners like syrups and dry sweeteners lead to diabetes, pre-diabetes, reactive hypoglycemia and weight gain.
- Sweeteners of all types cause unhealthy intestinal environments causing overgrowth of bacteria and yeast which can cause much fatigue and discomfort.
- Cane sugar and other specific sources of sweeteners are commonly seen on IgG food sensitivity panels and are associated with inflammation and pain in different body parts.

Reading Labels

The food industry adds sugars and sweeteners to just about everything. About $\frac{3}{4}$ of ALL the food products in the grocery store contain added sugar, much of which will surprise you. The source of all this sweetness is variable. It may be from beets, sugar cane or corn. Some of the newer products will use sources like agave, dates and coconut. But no matter the source, they are still concentrated sweeteners and most of us are eating/drinking too much of it.

If you are avoiding sugar as part of an IgG food sensitivity elimination plan, then your current focus is to avoid sweeteners from that/those food source(s). If your food sensitivity panel shows that you are sensitive to cane sugar and honey, then technically a food sweetened with date sugar or coconut sugar would be OK at this point.

If you are avoiding sugar as part of a dysbiosis protocol or for blood sugar or weight control, then you need to broadly avoid all concentrated sweeteners.

You can do this by reading the Ingredients Label of all pre-made/pre-packaged foods that you consume (and of course, also try to rely less on pre-packaged foods...). The Ingredients Label is not the same as the Nutrition Box. The Nutrition Box contains calorie information. It does list the grams of sugar in a serving, but that description does not always differentiate between naturally occurring sugar (like the sugar in grapes, for example) and added sugar like an ice cream bar. Sometimes it is by listing sugar as total sugar and then underneath it will say “including so many grams added sugar”, but not always, so don’t rely in it. Rather, read the Ingredients Label below. You will need to carefully read this list line by line looking for any ingredient that ends in “-ose” or “syrup” or “sugar”. Examples:

- Sucrose
- Fructose
- High fructose corn syrup
- Corn syrup
- Cane sugar
- Dried cane syrup
- Corn syrup solids
- Sugar
- Maltodextrin
- Dextrose
- Sucralose
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Avave syrup
- Coconut sugar
- Molasses (usually from cane sugar plant)

Even natural sweeteners like raw honey, stevia, PURE maple syrup are concentrated sweeteners. In these cases, your doctor *may* create minor allowances depending on the issue at hand, so double-check before you get settled into your improved shopping habits. Importantly, if you are consuming these types of natural sweeteners, make sure they are truly pure. Unfortunately, if a label says “100% honey or maple syrup” or “all natural”, it may not be accurate. The food industry is allowed to fib a little bit. Often times, these products are

“cut” with sugar and corn syrup for profit purposes. It is only safe to trust local and organic distributors when it comes to honey and maple syrup

Artificial Sweeteners

Artificial sweeteners should NOT under any circumstances be used. This includes this like aspartame, Sweet-n-low, Nutrasweet, saccharin, acesulfame, Splenda, etc. These are extremely harmful to the body and should be eliminated / replaced immediately.

Foods that Often Secretly Contain Sugars

Tip #1: Avoid all desserts unless it's been verified that they do not contain any form of cane sugar. Using a more benign sweetener that is cane-free like raw honey would be a better option for things during the course of an elimination diet, or use fruit instead.

Tip #2: Analyze any snack-foods. Snack foods like chips and crackers, peanut butter and dips often contain sugar. Dried fruits are also often coated with sugar, so check the label.

Tip #3: Caution with soups and sauces. Many prepared soups and various sauces (pasta sauce, for example) contain sugar.

Tip #4: Avoid breads & baked goods, even the gluten-free ones. Many breads have sugar in them anyway, but the gluten-free ones often have even more sugar and from multiple sources in order to compensate for texture and flavor.

Tip #5: Vet your dairy and non-dairy products. Most yogurts and many dairy-free milks will be sweetened. Almost always, unsweetened varieties occur, but you have to be vigilant about grabbing the right container.

Tip #6: Breakfast foods are often contaminated. Cereals, granolas, granola bars, juices - these are landmines of sugar. Opt for Paleo versions of breakfasts foods (shop Paleo brands or google Paleo recipe substitutions), or stick with whole fruits, nuts & seeds, egg dishes, etc.

Shopping Tips for Avoiding Sugars

- Focus on buying whole foods, or foods that are not processed / pre-packaged
- Stay at the perimeter of the store. The produce section will be your best bet at avoiding added sugars.

Snacking Tips for Avoiding Sugars

- Plain rice crackers: dip in fresh salsa, hummus, peanut/almond butter (check label for added sugar) or have plain. Add to a platter with dried fruits, apple slices
- For convenient snacks, opt for fresh fruits like apples, oranges/clementine, bananas
- Dried fruits are great too – dates are extremely sweet as are dried plums and raisins. *Check the ingredients label to ensure there is no added sugar coated on the outside of the dried fruits (as is often done with dried cranberries, etc).* These can be munched on by themselves, or blended into smoothies for sweetness, added to oatmeal, etc.
- Apple slices with peanut butter make a great snack. I like to sprinkle these with carob chips (a chocolate chip alternative as it is without sugar)
- Vegetable slices (celery, carrots, cherry tomatoes, cucumber slices) with hummus is an all-time favorite. Hummus comes in so many flavors, you can't get bored!
- Nuts! Cashews, pecans, walnuts, almonds: these are a great snack and full of protein!
- Popcorn: you can purchase pre-popped popcorn like Buddha Bowl brand's Himalayan Pink Organic Popcorn, or you can make it yourself at home in an air-popper or over the stove. Sprinkle with sea salt and a little coconut oil for flavoring and enjoy!
- Ancient grain crackers: Mary's Gone Crackers is a brand that tends away from using added sugars and has several flavors that give the crunch you're looking for without the junk
- Plain rice cakes or "stackers": These can be had plain or with hummus or nut butter spread thinly over the top
- Organic corn tortilla chips: while too many of these isn't exactly a "health food", having a few dipped in fresh salsa is a great snack choice. As long as the chips aren't seasoned, they should be without added sugar. Way Better and Beanitos brands are chips of which *most* types are sugar free and are better sources of fiber and protein than potato chips. *This tip is applicable to people avoiding sugar cane or other IgG sensitivities. This is not applicable to those avoiding sugar for weight loss or blood sugar reasons.*
- "Gummies" that are sweetened only with natural fruit juice (check label thoroughly) (health food section of Hannaford's, or at the Co-op). *This tip is applicable to people avoiding sugar cane or other IgG sensitivities. This is not applicable to those avoiding sugar for weight loss or blood sugar reasons.*
- Protein bars: opt for the LARA brand as these typically are made with very few ingredients that are minimally processed.