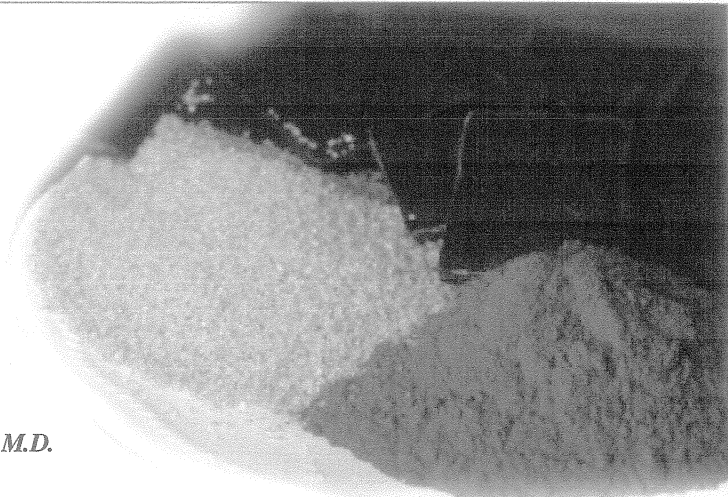


Uncovering the Truth About Sugar

by David C. Leopold, M.D.



Our craving for sugar may be a habit or something we're born with. Whatever the cause, it's hard to resist that sweet sensation.

Sugar provides energy our bodies need but, when misused, it can cause serious damage. Too much sugar can lead to long-term problems, including weight gain, diabetes and heart disease. Most Americans consume about 31 teaspoons of sugar each day, far more than the recommended 8 to 10 teaspoons daily.

A cup of coffee with two teaspoons of sugar and a blueberry muffin, at six teaspoons of sugar, is just about the daily sugar quota.* Add one can of cola, which has nearly seven teaspoons of sugar, and the total – 15 teaspoons – is well beyond a healthy amount of sugar.

Sugary food and drinks often pack a lot of calories and fat. Soda is especially harmful. It's loaded with high-fructose corn syrup, which increases hunger, and liquid calories that don't fill you up like calories from food do.

High-fructose corn syrup, a thick liquid made from corn starch, is used in many other foods, including ketchup, jelly, cookies, baked goods and gum. In the body, it acts more like a fat than a sugar, which means it could contribute to weight gain. High-fructose corn syrup may also contribute to liver disease, diabetes and other problems. Because it is in so many foods, you need to be diligent about reading nutrition labels to avoid it.

Natural sugar found in whole foods are better choices than artificial and processed foods. It is better to use sugar in moderation than to use artificial sweeteners like saccharin and aspartame. More research is needed about how artificial sweeteners affect our bodies.

Healthy Ways to Beat Sugar Cravings

Have a Good Breakfast: Whole grain cereals with nuts, an omelet (preferably egg white) with vegetables or fruits, or a meal replacement drink are good choices.

Eat Natural Sugars: Fruits, vegetables and whole grains are packed with natural sugars.

Don't Skip Meals: Skipping meals increases sugar cravings. Eat regular meals and fill up on whole foods such as vegetables.

Try Healthy Meal Replacements: They are quick and easy.

Experiment with Healthy Sweet Treats: Enjoy small amounts of organic dark chocolate (with at least 60 percent cocoa) and dried fruits instead of ice cream and cookies.

Ditch the Soda: Drink naturally flavored carbonated water and green or herbal teas.

Eat Super Foods: These nutrient-dense foods, such as blueberries, walnuts, salmon and broccoli, will fill you up and not let you down. Nothing beats cravings better than a well-balanced diet.

To schedule a comprehensive integrative medicine consultation, call **1-800-SCRIPPS**.



David C. Leopold, M.D., integrative medicine specialist, recommends "super foods" such as blueberries and turmeric, shown here.

* Consult your physician if you have an existing medical condition or are at high risk for disease. He or she may recommend dietary changes to help prevent disease.