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Take Out the Sugar, Protect Your Health

Americans typically consume an average of 22 teaspoons, or 110 grams of sugar daily, which equals an extra 350 non-nutritive calories every day, according to Jacquie Eubanks, R.N., BSN. However, that average of sugar consumption does not include information from the Obesity Society that claims the top 20 percent of adult consumers are eating an additional 721 empty calories in added sugar daily. Equally alarming, the top 20 percent of children are consuming an average of 673 calories from added sugars each day, according to Eubanks.



Research shows that added sugar consumption has increased by more than 30 percent over the last three decades. Along with increased consumption, the general state of health of Americans has declined. Data shows that two-thirds of American adults are overweight or obese, one child in six is obese, and almost 115 million adults have diabetes or prediabetes.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends that everyone reduce their daily intake of added sugars to less than six teaspoons, or below five percent of total daily calories.

How Added Sugar is Harmful to Your Health

Added sugar refers to sugar that is in addition to sugars naturally present in healthy nutritious foods, such as dairy and fruit. Added sugars are omnipresent in processed foods, sweetened beverages and condiments. Sugar also is a main ingredient in foods such cereals and yogurts. Over time, overconsumption of added sugars can negatively affect natural hunger and satiety hormone balance, leading to insulin and leptin resistance, according to Eubanks.

Although added sugars may supply a short-term energy boost, they provide no nutritive benefit and decrease nutrient density in the diet, often contributing to the risk of inflammation, tooth decay, cardiovascular disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, Alzheimer's disease, and type 2 diabetes, as well as classic metabolic syndrome with symptoms of weight gain, abdominal obesity, high blood pressure and elevated triglycerides and blood sugar, according to Eubanks.

What Happens When You Give Up Sugar

Those who are accustomed to a diet high in sugar can experience unpleasant short-term side effects when eliminating sugar from the diet. Cutting sugar from the diet can bring on withdrawal symptoms such as irritability, fatigue and headaches.

Fortunately, these side effects are short-lived, while the positive health effects such as better sleep, stable energy levels, improved immune health, lowered triglycerides and more stabilized blood sugar will remain if the diet continues to be low in sugar, according to Eubanks.

Reducing the amount of sugar in the diet can result in a healthier weight, smaller waist size, healthier looking skin and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes.

How to Shift to a Restricted Sugar Diet

Drinking plenty of water, eating nourishing foods such as a variety of fresh vegetables and fruits and healthy fats, such as those found in avocados and fish, can help to keep the appetite and cravings under control and reduce withdrawal symptoms while transitioning to a healthier pattern of eating.

In addition, choosing whole, unprocessed high-fiber foods, and skipping foods with lengthy ingredient lists will help you eliminate sources of added sugars. Enjoy an occasional sweet treat, but be aware of the total amount of sugar consumed daily. Individuals who are looking to stabilize or reduce their blood sugar level, may also consider reducing refined carbohydrates, especially those who are prediabetic or overweight, according to Eubanks.



December ALTRUM NEWS Tips to Stay Healthy, Happy Through the Holidays

The holiday season is in full swing. It's the time of year for joy, fellowship and hope. Sometimes all of the extra activities and get-togethers lead to overeating, derailed exercise routines, lack of sleep and increased feelings of stress.

It doesn't have to be that way. There are a number of things you can do to get through the holidays without weight gain, exhaustion and stress. This issue brings you some tips what will help through the season.

Support Your Healthy Lifestyle



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