

Top Tips and Activities!

Reducing Sugar



Generally, people in the UK consume too much sugar. Avoiding sugar is difficult as it is present in nearly all foods whether naturally or artificially. However, cutting down on added sugars and monitoring sugar intake can be relatively straightforward.

Naturally occurring sugars

Sugars such as fructose, which is found in fruits and vegetables, and lactose, which is found in milk, occur naturally in foods. As these foods are known to have many health benefits, which outweigh any negative effects, consumption is recommended meaning that sugar is eaten as part of a balanced diet. Lactose, which is found in milk, has been shown not to cause damage to teeth meaning that milk is a good option to drink in between meals. However, fructose, found in fruit and fruit juices can be damaging to teeth. Fruit consumed as a whole is less damaging, as the sugar is contained within the structure of the fruit. When the fruit is juiced or pressed to make juice, the sugar is released and coats the teeth, which could lead to tooth decay. For this reason, fruit juice and also honey, are best consumed with a meal as the saliva produced in response to the food will help to cleanse the mouth and prevent tooth decay.

Added sugars

Many products have added sugar; the best way to find out how much sugar is in a certain product is to look at both the nutrition information on the packet, and the ingredients list. Generally, sugar content is listed under carbohydrates; the phrase 'of which sugars' is usually used to indicate the level of sugar in the food. A food low in sugar contains less than 3 grams per 100 grams and a food high in sugar contains more than 15 grams per 100 grams. Also, sugar can be listed as a number of different names on the ingredients list, including sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose, hydrolysed starch, invert sugar, corn syrup, molasses, dextrose and honey. Remember, the higher the ingredient in the list, the more

the product contains. Bear in mind that foods containing a high level of milk or fruit will naturally contain a higher level of sugar. Checking the label is a good way of monitoring sugar intake as foods such as breakfast cereals and sauces may contain more sugar than expected.

Ideas to cut down sugar intake...

- Try drinking water or milk in between meals rather than fruit juice or sugary drinks.
- Dilute fruit juice with water or sparkling water to reduce the sugar content of drinks
- Choose breakfast cereals with no added sugar
- If you usually add sugar to cereals, try stopping gradually by adding a little less each time
- Try sweetening foods with cinnamon or vanilla rather than sugar
- Opt for reduced sugar products such as beans, jams and sauces
- Try replacing snacks such as cakes and biscuits for scones or malt loaf
- When baking, try cutting down the amount of sugar used
- Try using apple sauce, mashed banana or fruit juice to replace sugar in baking as they are usually lower in calories
- Replace spread such as jam or marmalade with low fat cream cheese and fruit
- Buy fruit canned with juice rather than syrup
- Add fresh, dried, frozen or canned fruit to plain yoghurt rather than buying fruit flavoured varieties
- Read labels carefully, different brands can vary significantly in the amount of sugar used
- Don't keep treat such as chocolate or sweets in the house
- Eat fruits which are in season as they are often naturally sweeter