weight gain

increased body fat

sugar-induced brain fog

increased risk of type 2 diabetes

Curb your SUGAR CONSUMPTION

systemic inflammation

elevated cortisol levels

obesity

fatigue

depression



A16-ounce mocha latte can contain a whopping 35 grams of sugar!

Sugar can affect more than just your waistline

Most of us are aware of the negative effects excessive sugar consumption can have on our health – weight gain, increased body fat, increased risk of type 2 diabetes, elevated cortisol levels and obesity, among a slew of other health problems. **But what you may not realize is the effect sugar can have on other areas of your life, including your mental health.**

Studies show that sugar activates the reward center of our brain, releasing opioid peptides and dopamine, the same pathways that are activated by addictive drugs. So no, you aren't just imagining that overwhelming feel-good sensation you get from Grandma's chocolate chip cookies! However, because of that longing we so often feel for those goodies, it can be especially hard to turn them down. And, unfortunately, that feel-good vibe is fleeting.

© 2021 United HealthCare Services, Inc.

How sugar affects your mental health

Simple sugars cause a sharp spike in blood sugar, making a positive impact on our feelings. But after that peak comes an equally sharp drop in blood glucose levels, which can dramatically affect the mind and body. These peaks and drops in blood glucose can cause irritability and mood swings as your body tries to restore its natural balance.

Recent medical research shows a link between sugar and depression and anxiety.

In addition to sugar causing an insulin level imbalance, simple carbs and sugar can deplete vitamin B levels, which are required to maintain a positive mood. Hormones, such as those controlled by your thyroid, play a big role in mental health and mood, too. Your thyroid regulates many of your body's main functions, such as metabolism and development. When one of your body's main hormone systems becomes out of balance, it can lead to an array of health conditions, thus impacting your mood and behavior.





Weight gain, diabetes, and mood swings can all be influenced by high sugar consumption.

So, as sugar can directly impact your mood through hormone levels and spikes in insulin, conditions that are heavily linked to sugar consumption, such as diabetes and obesity, often come with depressive and anxiety conditions. In fact, individuals with type 2 diabetes are twice as likely to experience depression.

Sugar can also exacerbate existing mental health conditions. Additionally, elevated sugar levels can cause systemic inflammation, which is a trigger for a multitude of health conditions, including fatigue and related conditions, such as obesity and depression.

© 2021 United HealthCare Services, Inc.

How to change your habits

If you want to decrease your sugar intake, do not be dismayed: Habits take time to establish, and trying to dive in too quickly makes it difficult to stick to long-term goals. Below are a few tactics you can use to decrease your sugar consumption in a realistic way.

1. Use sugar substitutes

Swap out your sugar for a healthier alternative. Even splitting the ratio of sugar to sugar substitutes when cooking or bakings can dramatically reduce the amount you're ingesting. For example, try using half granulated sugar and half monk fruit extract. Here are several other options to try.

Natural sugar substitutes:

- Monkfruit extract
- Xylitol
- Erythritol
- Stevia



Low glycemic index sweeteners:

- Agave nectar
- Maple syrup
- Honey
- Date nectar
- Yacon syrup
- Coconut sugar



DAILY SERVING SIZE

WOMEN: 24 grams of sugar (6 tsp)

MEN: 36 grams of sugar (9 tsp)

CHILDREN OVER THE AGE OF 2:
less than 25 grams of sugar

2. Cut back on:

- **Sugary beverages**
- **Highly processed foods**
- **Fast foods**

Start making small steps toward decreasing your sugar consumption by eliminating sugary beverages first.

The average can of soda contains 39 grams of sugar, whereas the typical drink from your favorite coffee shop averages 40-50 grams per drink.

- **Hidden sugars:**

There are many hidden sugars lurking in processed and fast foods. Remember, just because something doesn't taste sweet, doesn't mean that the item doesn't contain large quantities of simple sugars. Many breads, dressings and condiments contain these sugars.

© 2021 United HealthCare Services, Inc.

3. Practice portion control

It isn't good practice to restrict yourself from all the comforts and joys of eating the foods you love. It is good practice to eat them in moderation, though. So make trade-offs when you choose to consume these tasty concoctions. Don't eat dessert after every meal, or even after every dinner. Save your sweet tooth for special occasions and limit yourself to one serving.



4. Understand food labels

Pay attention to the ingredients list on your food labels and know that ingredients are listed in order of highest to lowest concentrations.

Take a peek at the back of the label and note the grams of sugar per serving and serving size. Sometimes the serving size for an "individual" snack or beverage is only half or a third of the item you're eating!

5. Learn the lingo

Sugar goes by more than 56 names, but not all sugar is created equal. Many table sugars and sugars contained in processed foods and treats are high on the glycemic index, meaning they cause a sharp spike in insulin levels. Conversely, foods lower on the glycemic index cause blood sugar to rise more slowly, making it easier for your body to process.

Look for:



- No added sugar
- No artificial sweeteners
- Naturally sweetened
- Canned fruit in fruit juice or water
- No high fructose corn syrup
- Made with real fruit

Avoid:

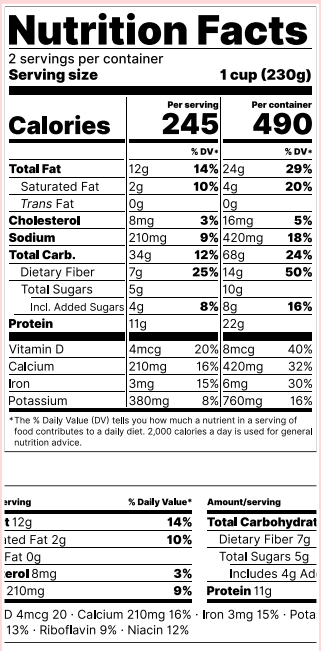
- Contains artificial sweeteners
- High fructose corn syrup

Other common names for sugar:

- Fructose
- Dextrose
- Glucose
- Maltose
- Galactose
- Lactose
- Sucrose

Artificial sweeteners:

- Saccharin
- Sucralose
- Aspartame



Nutrition Facts

2 servings per container

Serving size **1 cup (230g)**

	Per serving		Per container	
Calories	**245**		**490**	
		% DV*		% DV*
Total Fat	12g	**14%**	24g	**29%**
Saturated Fat	2g	**10%**	4g	**20%**
Trans Fat	0g		0g	
Cholesterol	8mg	**3%**	16mg	**5%**
Sodium	210mg	**9%**	420mg	**18%**
Total Carb.	34g	**12%**	68g	**24%**
Dietary Fiber	7g	**25%**	14g	**50%**
Total Sugars	5g		10g	
Incl. Added Sugars	4g	**8%**	8g	**16%**
Protein	11g		22g	
Vitamin D	4mcg	20%	8mcg	40%
Calcium	210mg	16%	420mg	32%
Iron	3mg	15%	6mg	30%
Potassium	380mg	8%	760mg	16%

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

erving	% Daily Value*	Amount/serving
t 12g	**14%**	**Total Carbohydrat**
ıted Fat 2g	**10%**	Dietary Fiber 7g
Fat 0g		Total Sugars 5g
erol 8mg	**3%**	Includes 4g Ad
210mg	**9%**	**Protein** 11g

D 4mcg 20 · Calcium 210mg 16% · Iron 3mg 15% · Pota
13% · Riboflavin 9% · Niacin 12%

The FDA requires packages to display if a product contains added sugar.

© 2021 United HealthCare Services, Inc.