

Healthy Starts Today

Nutrition Made Easy for Busy Families

**The Number One
Way To Upgrade Your Family's Health**



Reducing Sugar is the Number One Way to Upgrade Your Family's Health.

Researchers are citing heavily sweetened drinks and snacks as a prime cause for today's dramatic rise in Childhood Obesity. It is also seen as directly related to increases of Type II Diabetes and Heart Disease in children and teens. Even if you seldom buy a 5# bag of sugar, that other form of sugar, High Fructose Corn Syrup, or HFCS is found in many of the foods you do buy like breakfast cereals, spaghetti sauce, ketchup and even toothpaste! It is heavily used as a sweetener in soda as well, often providing 55% of many children's daily calories. Drinking one 12oz can of HFCS sweetened soda is the equivalent of eating 4 chocolate chip cookies. Unfortunately many kids are drinking the soda and eating the cookies too. Eliminating sweets entirely might not be completely realistic, but greatly reducing the amount of HFCS your family consumes will improve their present and future health. The following steps are designed to help make your family health upgrade easier. For less resistance and better results begin to make changes gradually.

Step 1. Start with Soda.

Ask the kids what they like best ... the taste, or the fizz?

If it is the fizz:

Buy naturally flavored, *unsweetened* seltzers. Polar Beverages™ make great flavors.

If it is the taste:

Limit the amount of soda served by adding plenty of ice. Cut soda with unsweetened, flavored seltzer. Slowly, over time decrease the soda and increase the seltzer.

Consider purchasing a soda maker, like the Sodastream™ \$89.00 – \$129.00 on Amazon.com. It is a fun item, makes noises your kids will find hilarious and lends itself to creative drink creations; just stick to the all-natural, **unsweetened** flavor essences that come included.

Meanwhile make sure plenty of pure, fresh water is easily available. To add flavor, have slices of fruit, mint, or other herbs ready to add.

Buy pure, bottled spring water, or consider buying re-useable water bottles. Brita™ makes one for filtered water. \$7.88 on Amazon.com.

A single bag of herb tea added to bottled water makes for a tasty, sugar free drink. Let the kids pick a flavor. Celestial Seasonings™ makes good blends.

Check the labels on sports drinks and flavored water, many are heavily sweetened. Cold, clean water is still the best sports drink.

Limited amounts of fruit juice, if **freshly squeezed** can be a good drink choice too. Avoid any fruit juices with added HFCS. Water down "naturally sweetened" juices.

FYI Simply do not resort to artificially, sweetened drinks. They are a very poor health choice.

Step 2. Replace Sugary Snacks

As part of your efforts to upgrade your family's health by reducing sugar consumption, you will want to replace many snack foods with healthy alternatives. Start reading labels. If sugar, or any word ending in ...ose is listed as one of the first three ingredients, pick something else.

Kids can be truly hungry after school, especially if they eat "on the early lunch wave". A half sandwich on whole grain bread, a wrap, or a cup of soup makes a healthy snack to restore energy.

Buy small amounts of cashews, peanuts, walnuts, almonds, pumpkin or sunflower seeds. Once you know what's popular you can buy in bulk to save money. Let the kids create their own custom blends of Trail Mix.

Fresh fruit in season is also a good choice for snacks. A family outing to a "picking" farm can be fun almost any time of year.

Unsweetened peanut, almond or cashew butter, spread on sliced apples, or pears, is another healthy choice kids enjoy. Nut butters also tastes good with baby carrots and celery sticks.

Plain yogurt is very versatile. It can become a "sweet treat" with the addition of fruit and nuts, or a dip for cut up veggies, when mixed with salsa and herbs.

Hummus, a blend of chickpeas, spices and herbs also makes a great dip for baby carrots, sliced veggies etc. It's a healthy spread for sandwiches too.

Chips, rice cakes and popcorn can be healthy, if baked and free of sugars, but limit quantities.

FYI Most 100 calories snack packs are primarily 100 calories of sugar without any hunger curbing, nutritional value. Save your money and make your own.

Step 3. Choose Natural Sweeteners

Most likely, your family members won't lose their taste for sweet things overnight. Remember, the objective is to break away from HFCS and overly sweetened snacks. During the transition, natural sweeteners are a good alternative. With thanks to the Institute of Integrative Nutrition, here are several healthy choices, as well as, some to consider more carefully. Think drizzles, sprinkles and pinches when using the following...

Honey

Honey is one of the oldest, natural sweeteners. It is actually sweeter than sugar, so a little goes a long way. Depending on the flower source, it can have a range of flavors. Using local honey is suggested as a way to manage seasonal allergies. Raw honey should not be given to infants and small children.

Maple Syrup

Maple syrup adds a pleasant flavor to foods and is great for baking. Be sure to buy 100% pure maple syrup and not maple-flavored corn syrup.

Stevia

Stevia made from the leaves of a South American plant, is 100 to 300 times sweeter than white sugar. It can be used in cooking, baking and drinks, does not affect blood sugar levels and has zero calories. Stevia is available in a powder, or liquid form. The flavored versions are a good place to start.

Raw Coconut Crystals

Made from the sap of coconut trees, this sweetener has a mild taste, almost like brown sugar. It has many uses and as your family's taste for sugar diminishes will become the "just sweet enough" choice to sprinkle on berries, cereal etc.

Agave Nectar

Agave nectar is a natural liquid sweetener made from the juice of the agave cactus. It is 1.4 times sweeter than refined sugar, and won't spike blood sugar. A little drizzle sweetens just enough.

Barley Malt

Barley malt is made from soaking, sprouting, mashing, cooking and roasting barley. This process creates simple sugars that are more of a whole food than many other sweeteners. Barley malt can come in the form of powder or syrup.

Birch Sugar

Also referred to as xylitol, this natural sugar substitute can be made from tree fiber or corncobs and occurs naturally in many fruits and mushrooms. Birch sugar is sweet, yet low on the glycemic index. It has 40% fewer calories than sugar, prevents tooth decay and repairs tooth enamel.

Brown Rice Syrup

This product consists of brown rice that has been ground and cooked. Brown rice syrup tastes like moderately sweet butterscotch. In recipes, you may have to use up to 50% more brown rice syrup than sugar and reduce the amount of other liquids.

Date Sugar

Date sugar consists of finely ground, dehydrated dates, maintaining the fruit's vitamin, mineral and fiber content. If your family likes the taste of dates, this will definitely appeal. Date sugar can be used as a direct replacement for sugar and comes in a granulated form.

Sugar in its many forms is a choice to consider very carefully.

Molasses

Organic molasses is probably the most nutritious sweetener derived from sugar cane or sugar beet, and is made by a process of clarifying and blending the extracted juices. The longer the juice is boiled, the less sweet, more nutritious and darker the product is. Molasses has a very distinct flavor. Blackstrap molasses, the most nutritious variety, is a good source of iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium.

Rapadura

This brand-name product is made from a process of extracting juice from the sugarcane plant, evaporating the water from the juice, and then grinding the results into a fine powdery texture. Rapadura is organic, rich in vitamins and minerals and unrefined.

Sucanat

Short for Sugar Cane Natural, this brand-name product consists of evaporated organic cane juice made by a mechanical, rather than a chemical process. Because it is less refined it retains many of sugarcane's original vitamins and minerals. It has a grainy texture and can be used in place of white sugar

White Sugar

White Sugar is highly refined and is best avoided or used very sparingly. Kids' version of a sprinkle, or a just a shake, might be far too much, so consider buying sugar packets. Each packet contains about a half teaspoon of sugar. Make one or two packets the limit.

FYI Remember, AVOID ALL CHEMICAL SUGAR SUBSTITUTES they are bad for everyone's health and actually may increase the desire for highly sweetened food and drink.