

The Season of Sugar....what are the recommendations?

Kids and their parents get very excited for the upcoming holiday seasons. For many of us, this time of year signifies a season of “treats” including candy and other sweets. But what are the “tricks” behind all of the sugar which our kids eat and how best to manage this problem?

Recently, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has supported new nutritional guidelines by the American Heart Association (AHA) recommending limits on the consumption of added sugars to less than 25 grams/day for children and teens between 2 years to 18 years old. The recommendations go even further to recommend no added sugars to the diets of infants and toddlers under 2 years of age.

These recommendations are based on evidence from research supporting the connection between added sugars in the diet and obesity, high blood pressure, and abnormal lipids (e.g. cholesterol) all of which significantly increases the lifetime risk of heart disease and stroke. There is also increased risk for diabetes and liver disease from consuming added sugars. The association between “sugar sweetened beverages” (e.g. soda, juices, iced tea etc.) is particularly strong.

Per dietary data from 2009-2012 from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) on average all age groups are consuming amounts of sugar well above the recommended maximum of 25 grams/day as noted below:

- 2 to 5 year olds: average 53.3 gm added sugar/day
- 6 to 11 year olds: 78.7 gm/day
- 12 to 19 year olds: 92.9 gm/day

What this suggests is that *most kids are getting 2-3.5 times more added sugar a day in their diet than is the maximum recommended amount!*

So where to start? See the following link to our website for more information on useful strategies to a healthier approach to diet for your children regarding sugar. The links to the AHA websites below provide more information about the current recommendations.

www.middleboropediatrics.com

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Sugars-Added-Sugars-and-Sweeteners_UCM_303296_Article.jsp#.V_vJh_krKM8

Limiting added sugar in the diet – recommendations and tips

The American Heart Association (AHA) has made recommendations for limits to added sugars to the diet of children based upon research supporting the links between added sugar and increased risk of heart disease, stroke, obesity, and liver disease. As of the moment, there are no official dietary recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics regarding naturally occurring sugars or use of artificial sweeteners (such as in fruit or dairy products) in children as there is insufficient available research on these items in children.

Reading nutrition labels is important. Ingredients are listed in descending order by weight, so be careful with foods where sugars are near the top of the ingredient list. Added sugars are hidden in many “healthy” foods including “low-fat” items, granola bars, yogurt, and bread/cereal products, so check all of the labels on the foods you eat! Examples of added sugars to limit in foods include the following:

- high fructose corn syrup, molasses
- cane sugar
- corn sweetener
- raw sugar
- syrup
- honey
- fruit juice concentrates
- any ingredient ending in –ose (e.g. maltose, sucrose, dextrose)

There are 4 grams per teaspoon and 4 calories per gram of sugar. On a nutritional label, this means that if a product lists 20 grams of sugar per serving, than that means there are 5 teaspoons and 80 calories per serving of sugar! By July 2018, there will be changes to the nutritional labels on foods which among other items will list the amount of added sugars (total and as a percentage of recommended daily allowance). For examples of these changes, see the following link to the FDA website:

<http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceRegulation/GuidanceDocumentsRegulatoryInformation/LabelingNutrition/ucm385663.htm>

Below are AHA current guidelines for daily “added sugar” for children and adults:

- 0 – 2 years: No added sugar recommended in the diet
- 2-18 years: No more than 24 g (6 tsp) per day of added sugar
- 2 years and up: No more than one 8 oz sugar sweetened beverage (soda, sports drinks, juices) per week. Stick to 100% fruit juice with no added sugar when drinking juice.
- Adult women: No more than 24 gm (6 tsp) per day
- Adult men: No more than 36 g (9 tsp) per day

Here are some tips on ways to cut added sugars out of your family's diet (extracted from AHA website):

- **Toss out the table sugar** (white and brown), syrup, honey and molasses. Cut back on the amount of sugar added to things you eat or drink regularly like cereal, pancakes, coffee or tea. Try cutting the usual amount of sugar you add by half and wean down from there.
- **Cut out the soda and juice.** Water and milk are always the best choices for kids!
- **Eat fresh, frozen, dried or canned fruits.** Choose fruit canned in water or natural juice. Avoid fruit canned in syrup. Drain and rinse in a colander to remove excess syrup or juice.
- **Compare food labels and choose products with the lowest amounts of *added* sugars.** Dairy and fruit products will contain some natural sugars. Added sugars can be identified in the ingredients list.
- **Add fruit.** Instead of adding sugar to cereal or oatmeal, try fresh or dried fruit
- **Cut the amounts back.** When baking cookies, brownies or cakes, cut the sugar called for in your recipe by one-third to one-half. Often you won't notice the difference.
- **Try extracts.** Instead of adding sugar in recipes, use extracts like almond, vanilla, orange or lemon.
- **Replace it completely.** Enhance foods with spices instead of sugar. Try ginger, allspice, cinnamon or nutmeg.
- **Substitute.** Switch out sugar with unsweetened applesauce in recipes (use equal amounts)

Healthy eating and good nutrition starting in infancy and extending through childhood is a cornerstone of good health and reduction of chronic disease throughout the entire lifespan. If you have further questions or concerns regarding your child's diet, feel free to contact your child's provider at the office.

Additional links to relevant pages at the American Heart Association Website:

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Nutrition/Sugars-Added-Sugars-and-Sweeteners_UCM_303296_Article.jsp#.V_vJh_krKM8

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/SimpleCookingwithHeart/Simple-Cooking-with-Heart-Added-Sugar-Infographic_UCM_463767_SubHomePage.jsp

Last revised October 12, 2016