

KEYS TO BETTER HEALTH™

Heart Health

Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men and women in the United States with 1 in every 4 deaths attributed to heart disease¹. When the subject of heart health arises fat, cholesterol and watching our sodium usually comes to mind— but what about added sugar intake? We're often told that we need to eat less sugar but did you know that doing so may help support your heart?

Added Sugar and Heart Health

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010 have shown that added sugars contribute an average of 16% of total calories in the American diet². Unlike fat and sodium, which we need in small amounts, our bodies do not need added sugar to function properly³. Sugar is often added to foods to enhance flavor or for functional reasons such as improving texture and structure. However, it offers no nutritional value and only contributes empty calories to our diet. When we eat more calories than we need or expend consistently over time, weight gain or obesity can occur, reducing heart health^{3,4}.



How Much is too Much?

The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugars to 100-150 calories per day for most women and men, respectively (6 teaspoons for most women and 9 teaspoons for most men)³. Considering that a typical 12 oz. can of regular soda has 10 teaspoons of sugar (4 grams of sugar = 1 teaspoon), it's important to keep a close eye on your daily food choices. The good news is that with a few simple lifestyle changes, it can be easy to decrease the overall amount of sugar you're taking in and eat an overall healthful diet.

Easily Cut Back on Sugar

1. When shopping, choose foods with the least amount of added sugar. How do you know if the product has added sugar? Check the ingredient line. Ingredients such as cane sugar, sucrose, fructose, syrup, honey, molasses, high fructose corn syrup, raw sugar, corn syrup, or fruit juice concentrates are all forms of added sugar.
2. Choose unsweetened beverages over sugar sweetened beverages.
3. Keep your eyes peeled for hidden sources of sugar. We expect to find sugar in cakes, cookies, and ice cream treats but often fail to consider less obvious sources of sugar such as pasta sauces or condiments.
4. Decrease the amount of sugar added to baked goods. Typically, you can reduce the amount of sugar called-for in a recipe by one third to one half the amount without noticing a difference⁴.
5. Use less sugar at home. In place of syrup, naturally sweeten up pancakes, waffles, breakfast cereal or oatmeal with nutrient-dense fresh fruit such as sliced bananas or berries.

Keys to Better Health™ offers a nutrition shelf-edge labeling program, which makes it easy for you to quickly identify healthy choices regardless of what diet you follow. When you're in our store, be on the lookout for our nutrition tags!

Resources:

1. Heart Disease Facts. Center for Disease Control website. <http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/facts.htm>. Updated August 10, 2015. Accessed November 13, 2015.
2. U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2010. 7th Edition, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 2010.
3. Added Sugars. American Heart Association website. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HealthyEating/Added-Sugars_UCM_305858_Article.jsp#.VkTTJ3arRhF. Updated November 19, 2014. Accessed November 12, 2015.
4. Tips for Cutting Down on Sugar. American Heart Association website. http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/GettingHealthy/NutritionCenter/HealthyEating/Tips-for-Cutting-Down-on-Sugar_UCM_461811_Article.jsp#.VkYfh3arRhe. Updated October 24, 2014. Accessed November 13, 2015.

