

Sugar Awareness

Sugar, something that many of us enjoy treating ourselves to every now and then. Some of us have more of a sweet tooth than others, but much like most good things there are negatives associated with sugar intake which we should all be aware of. Sugar Awareness Week is a chance to discuss sugar's role in today's society, how it affects us as individuals and its downsides and also about its future.

What is sugar?

Sugar broken down to basics is a class of carbohydrates which tastes sweet as we all know. It is good for quick and easy fuel for your body and is usually extracted from natural resources e.g. glucose and fructose from honey and fruit and lactose from milk. Our traditional table sugar is produced by crystallising the syrup from sugar cane and sugar beet plants.

How much sugar should we eat?

We all need to be aware of just how much sugar we should be consuming, how much is good and how much is bad see some pointers below:

- The Government recommendation says that we shouldn't be getting any more than 5% of our daily calories from sugar, that's about 100 calories for your average female and 120 for males.
- 5% of calories works out at around 30g of sugar or 6 teaspoons. Sounds a lot but there is a lot more sugar in our foods and drinks than we think.
- There are 39g of sugar in each can of coke. So one can of coke is more than your daily amount.
- In the UK, on average our sugar intakes per day is at least twice the recommended amount with the highest sugar being consumed by 4-18 year olds.

Why we should limit our intakes

We can all succumb to the luring desire to give ourselves treats here and there, or just finish a whole tub of ice cream in one sitting, but there are a number of reasons why we should at least be aware of how much sugar we are consuming so we can limit ourselves. Below are a few reasons why:

- High amount of sugar intake is associated with tooth decay

- Drinking too many sugar sweetened drinks is associated with an increased risk of type 2 diabetes
- Consuming too much food and drink high in sugars can lead to overconsumption of our calories and result in weight gain which then puts us at risk of other illnesses such as heart disease

How to keep an eye on your sugar intake

There's no easy solution or life hack to help us manage our sugar intake. It boils down to checking labels on packaging for both food and drink to establish just how much sugar is in the product before you consume it, is it too much? Would it be okay? It might come as a shock at just how much sugar you consume each day.

The other element of managing our sugar intake comes down to sheer will power. If you're wanting to live within your sugar limits then you would have to be strict with yourself. It is very easy to be tempted in to that one bite of pure sweet goodness which is why sugar has caused such problems for our health, we just can't seem to stop ourselves!

Summary

With all of the above in mind, being able to better limit our intake of sugar to lead generally healthier lives starts with understanding. So many of us only know that it tastes good, but by understanding what it is, how much we should have and why it can be bad we are opening a door of understanding which can enlighten you and potentially change your consumption for the best.

Useful Links

Here are some links to websites which you may also find useful to better understand and control sugar intake:

- [NHS Website – Sugar: the facts](#)
- [Heart.org – Tips for cutting down sugar](#)
- [Healthline – 11 reasons why too much sugar is bad for you](#)

More information

If you feel you may need some support, you can contact Care first. Care first is a leading provider of confidential, professional counselling, information and advice services. All employees are eligible to use Care first, our services include; telephone counselling, information services and online support. Call Care first on the Freephone number provided by your organisation and you can speak to a professional in confidence.