

Cooperative Extension

Promoting Healthy Families, Schools and Communities

The Not-So-Sweet Truth About Added Sugars

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Many Americans consume much more sugar than is healthy. While our bodies need some sugar to function properly, they do not need added sugars.

Naturally-Occurring Sugars vs. Added Sugars

Some sugars occur naturally in fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and some grains. Eating these foods, as part of a complete, balanced diet, provides enough sugar for our bodies’ needs. Our bodies do not need any amount of **added** sugars to stay healthy. **Added sugars** are put into foods during processing or preparation, or are added by the consumer before eating.

Why should I avoid added sugars?

Too much added sugar in the diet can contribute to excess weight gain. Research also shows that there is a strong link between consumption of excess added sugar and conditions such as diabetes, fatty liver disease, and heart disease. Added sugars are also a major contributor to dental caries (cavities).

To know if a food contains added sugars, read the Nutrition Facts Label. The current Nutrition Facts label lists the total amount of sugar in grams per serving, a number that lumps together both naturally-occurring and added sugars. To find out if added sugars are included in this number, check the ingredient list for sugar or one of sugar’s many “aliases” (see box Sugar’s Aliases).

The new Nutrition Facts label, which will soon be required to appear on foods, will have a separate line for added sugars, making it easy to know if sugars in the food are naturally-occurring, or added.

How much sugar should I eat?

The American Heart Association recommends that women and children eat or drink no more than 24 grams (6 teaspoons), and men eat or drink no more than 36 grams or 9 teaspoons per day. For reference, there are more than 65 grams or 16 teaspoons of added sugar in one 20-ounce bottle of soda/pop.

Tips to avoid added sugars:

- ✓ **Learn sugar’s “aliases.”** Look for these names of sugar on the ingredient lists to find out if a food contains added sugar.
- ✓ **Opt for unsweetened** beverages and drink them as sold, or add a small amount of sugar yourself. Even if you add a packet of sugar (which generally contain between 2-4 grams of sugar), that is much less sugar than pre-sweetened varieties contain.

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✓ **Try a savory breakfast**, such as eggs or plain yogurt. This can reduce added sugars in your diet by eliminating common sweetened breakfast foods such as cereals and pastries.

✓ **Compare nutrition labels** and memorize brands low in added sugar that you know to be available in stores where you normally shop. This may take some time to research initially but will save you time (and sugar!) in the long run.

✓ **If you keep sugary snacks on your kitchen counter, desk, or other easily accessible places, put them away!** Keeping sweet snacks so easily accessible increases the chances that you will consume them.

In summary: our bodies can get all the sugar they need from foods with naturally-occurring sugars. Knowing how and where to find added sugars, and how to avoid them, can help to keep your intake to a minimum. Practice reading labels and incorporate the tips above to ensure that your added sugar intake stays within recommended limits for a healthy diet.

Where can I find added sugars?

Currently, the number one source of added sugars in the American diet is sugar sweetened beverages including:

- soda/pop
- fruit drinks that are not 100% fruit juice
- iced tea
- lemonade
- energy drinks
- sports drinks

Added sugars are also found in many other foods, including:

- breakfast cereals
- breads
- pasta sauces
- granola bars
- yogurt
- canned fruit
- canned beans
- condiments like ketchup, barbecue sauce, and salad dressings
- protein/health bars

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Sugar's "Aliases"

Sugar can be described by several other names, including, but not limited to:

- brown sugar
- corn sweetener
- corn syrup
- dextrose
- fructose
- glucose
- high fructose corn syrup
- honey
- invert sugar
- lactose
- malt syrup
- maltose
- molasses
- raw sugar
- sucrose
- trehalose
- turbinado sugar
- cane sugar
- syrup
- fruit juice concentrates (for example, apple juice concentrate)
- cane juice / evaporated cane juice
- cane syrup
- fruit nectars
- malt sugar
- barley malt
- agave



The Avocado Trend

Jaclyn Soter, Montclair State University Dietetic Intern, Class of 2019
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Once a simple and not so popular fruit, the avocado has become a countrywide obsession, from avocado based dishes to fun cartoon avocados on socks and t-shirts. Studies show that retail stores in the United States made approximately \$2.8 billion in sales of avocados in the year 2017. With avocados being largely grown in Mexico and Central America, this nutritious and delicious food is changing the eating patterns of people all over America.

The avocado has been around for almost 10,000 years, with consumption of wild avocados starting mainly in Central America. It wasn't until 1833 when the avocado fruit was first brought to our country and planted in the state of Florida. The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has found that production of this crop now occurs mostly in California, Florida and Hawaii, with the US growing about 146,310 tons of avocados in 2017.

Here are Five Important Health Benefits of Avocados

•Promote Satiety

Avocados are loaded with fiber, making it a great fruit to increase fullness and therefore promote weight loss or maintenance. According to the American Heart Association, the average adult should consume about 25-30 grams of fiber per day. In just one medium sized avocado, there is 3 grams of dietary fiber, which is 11% of the daily value. The high amount of soluble fiber is also linked to lowering risk of diseases because of its positive effect on healthy gut bacteria.

•Heart Healthy

An avocado contains a high level of monounsaturated fat, which helps to increase HDL or the "healthy" fat levels in our bodies. Recent studies also show that eating avocados can decrease total cholesterol by about 22% and lower triglyceride levels by about 20%. Eating in moderation helps to keep your body full of the good fat and decreases the amount of bad fat.

•Rich in Potassium

For every 50 grams of avocado, there is about 250 mg of potassium. This amount is equal to about 6% of the daily value and almost 60% more potassium than found in bananas. Potassium is important for the body because it helps the heart muscles work efficiently, lowers blood pressure, builds muscle and protein, and maintains proper body growth.

•Improve Eye Health

Avocados are filled with antioxidants that help protect your eyes and enhance vision. Studies show that the carotenoids in avocados, called lutein and zeaxanthin, greatly reduce the risk of macular degeneration and cataracts in older adults. Consumption of avocados most likely will benefit eye health over a longer period of time because of these nutrients.

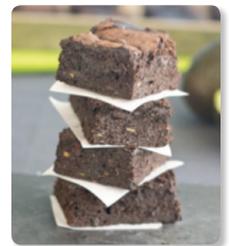
•Decrease Inflammation in the Body

The Omega-3 oils in an avocado benefit the body with their anti-inflammatory effects. They help to prevent joint damage and to reduce inflammation in individuals with osteoarthritis, which is a chronic disease of the bones prevalent in the elderly population.

Avocados are a nutritious food that can be included in a variety of dishes, whether they are for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Filled with healthy fats reducing the risk of heart disease, this fruit has many other benefits for the body, from bettering eye health to helping build strong muscles. For a few creative ideas, here are some delicious recipes.

Healthy Avocado Brownies:

- 4 large eggs
- 1 cup sugar
- 8 oz dark chocolate chips
- ½ cup dark cocoa powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- ½ cup whole wheat flour
- 2 medium avocados



<https://thecookful.com/avocado-brownies/>

This recipe is about 190 calories, 9 grams fat, 29 g carbohydrate and 4 grams protein per serving (1 brownie) via VeryWellfit recipe analysis.

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Top Ten Mindful Eating Steps to Teach Kids

Nour El-Zibdeh, MS, RD



Parents need to maximize their children’s relationship with food for a more enjoyable food experience with their family. We all want our children to eat healthy meals. We also want them to eat more fruits and vegetables, to like whole grains, to eagerly eat fish and other healthy proteins, and to drink more milk. We hope that they will eat less candy and avoid soda. The ultimate goal is for them to form a healthy relationship with food without fear of new foods or obsessions with habitual ones. Many times parents attempt to be good role models by fostering a healthy diet but instead end up setting food rules such as: no sugar, no candy, no preservatives which sends only negative messages to children. Instead, try focusing on a few key steps that will help a parent and their kids form even better relationships with food. Using mindful eating techniques will help children self-select healthier foods. Set your child up for success by practicing these strategies.

- **Accept that each person is different and unique, including your child.** There’s no right or wrong way of eating, but rather, a variety of ways to experience food. Teaching your child to eat healthfully and mindfully can start as early as toddlerhood. While mindfulness seems like a new health trend, your child is born a pro. Infants and toddlers are connected to their senses; they look, feel, smell, and taste their food before they eat. The younger the child, the closer he is to mindful eating. Keep in mind that preferences and awareness may change over time, even as adults! To navigate this in the healthiest way possible, awareness is key. This will set you up for a more balanced viewpoint on what is best for your child and for yourself. According to Elyn Satter, MS, RD, LCSW, BCD a family therapist and feeding/eating specialist, consider these suggestions.

- **Consider the concept of Division of Responsibility.**

Parents decide:

- **What to offer** – healthy foods
- **When** – mealtimes, not grazing throughout the day
- **Where** – in an environment supportive of feeding

Child decides:

- Whether he/she is going to eat and how much



- **Talk about food.** Toddlers are learning colors, shapes, and textures, and food is the perfect teaching tool. During conversations, discuss what a healthy food is. They don’t have a big understanding of health, so start with the basics. Instead of classifying food into good and bad, teach them to think of a healthy food as something that will help them grow, become strong, play hard, or run fast. Take it a step further, according to Satter, by deciding to “give your family’s diet an honest look”.
- **Get your child involved in food selection and meal preparation.** Comfort foods are taking shape, and habits your children develop now will stay with them for years after. Make sure you are doing what you can to make sure these are good habits.
- **Take your child grocery shopping and encourage her to select produce she wants to try.**
- **Make a habit of trying one different food, as a family, once a week.** Children like to help – let your child wash produce, set the table, toss the salad, sprinkle cheese or spices, or anything safe for her age.
- **Make your child aware of the effort it takes to prepare a healthy meal.**
- **Make meal times for meals only.** While it’s tempting to turn the TV on or feed your child when he’s playing, try to avoid doing so. One of the principles of mindful eating is to direct all awareness to the feeding experience. Give him utensils and let him eat on his own (don’t stress about the mess with your little ones!). At least once a day, eat meals together as a family. For younger kids, bring the highchair close to the table, or remove its tray and let your child use the family table.

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- **Be a role model.** Your actions and attitudes matter. Children who fear trying new foods usually have parents who do too, and children who are picky with vegetables might have parents who don't vary their vegetable intake. Children want what their parents have, so make sure you are eating healthy foods to nourish your body too. Be aware of how you think of or label foods to avoid being judgmental. Work on your parent role modeling daily to make sure you're doing the best you can be doing!
- **Don't reward eating a healthy food with something that is not.** "If you don't eat your vegetables, you can't have dessert." That implies he has to eat something that is nasty or that causes discomfort to get something that is sweet, delicious, and joyful. This does not encourage your child to love eating vegetables. It also makes him attach happiness and success to unhealthy foods. Instead, make fruits and vegetables festive, reward with fun activities or special attention, and offer dessert occasionally, detached from eating any other food. Learn more about avoiding food as a reward.
- **Be patient and continue to offer a variety of foods.** When your child refuses to eat something, ask her why. Help her acknowledge what caused her response: is it taste, smell, texture, or temperature? Remember that it takes 10 to 15 times for children to trust and try a new food. Offer it in different cooking methods, shapes, temperatures, and offer something that looks good. Let her move it around on her plate, and she will eventually make that jump from a food in her hand to a food in her mouth.
- **Abandon food rules.** Create too many unattainable rules you can't keep and end up with power struggles with your child. Be strict about the rules and risk raising a child that fears or over-controls his intake. While general guidelines help nourish your family, be careful not to go overboard. Remember that your child is developing impressions and attitudes towards food. Instead of countless rules, stick to a simple one: if you ate it once today, you can't eat it again.
- **Take it easy.** They won't eat the way you want all the time. Have an occasional treat, and allow your child to experiment with all foods. Most importantly of all, don't take the pleasure out of food. Create healthy eating memories, and at the same time, don't surrender or become a short-order cook. If they don't eat what you've offered for one meal, hunger will eventually kick in. It is all about trial and error, with patience and flexibility. At the end of the day, you and your children will be happier.

The Avocado Trend - continued from page 3



Avocado Melon Breakfast Smoothie:

- 1 fresh avocado
- 1 cup honeydew melon chunks
- 1 ½ tsp lime juice
- 1 cup fat-free milk
- 1 cup fat-free plain yogurt
- ½ cup apple or white grape juice
- 1 tbsp honey

<https://www.californiaavocado.com/recipe-details/view/31532/avocado-and-melon-breakfast-smoothie>

This recipe is about 422 calories, 20 g fat, 51 g carbohydrate and 14 g protein per serving (1 glass) via VeryWellfit recipe analysis.

Food Safety Tips for the Summer Months

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Donald W Schaffner, PhD, Distinguished Professor & Extension Specialist in Food Science



Summer brings warm weather and days at the beach, but it can also bring increased concerns about food safety. Many foodborne diseases peak during the summer months so it is important to remember to be extra cautious when handling food in the summer. Elevated temperatures and outdoor eating mean a better environment for bacterial growth in foods and increased challenges in practicing proper food handling. Many bacteria can grow between.

Additional Summer Safety Tips:

- ✓ **Proper Cooking** – Cook meats all the way through before consumption and do not leave out for extended periods after cooking. Cook steak, lamb, pork, and veal to 145°F, ground beef to 160°F, and chicken, turkey, and ground poultry to 165°F.
- ✓ **Clean Surfaces** – Keep surfaces being used for serving clean and avoid cross-contamination. Use separate utensils for grilling and serving as bacteria can transfer from raw to cooked meat via a contaminated plate, spatula or tongs. Do not put cooked foods onto a plate that was previously used for holding raw foods. Handwashing is best, but hand sanitizers can be used when soap and water are not available.
- ✓ **Separate** – Keep raw foods away from ready-to-eat foods especially when packing a cooler. Use tightly sealed containers and do not allow juices from raw meats to come in contact with foods that will not be cooked.
- ✓ **Leftovers** – Leftover food should be refrigerated or placed on ice as soon as possible. Foods left out for more than two hours should be discarded for best safety.
- ✓ **Proper Refrigeration** – Place already cold food in a cooler with ice or a gel pack if going on a picnic or eating outdoors. Keep coolers closed, out of the sun, and covered to help with temperature control.



The Myth of Mayonnaise:

Mayonnaise is probably not the cause of food poisoning in the summer or any other time of year! Commercial mayonnaise is actually free of harmful microorganisms because it's processed (heat treated), is high in acid, and contains preservatives. In fact, adding mayo probably reduces the risk of foodborne disease from any food! The myth may stem from the fact that products (like tuna or potato salad) that contain mayonnaise can cause foodborne disease. When they do, it's likely the other ingredients (chicken, tuna, potatoes, eggs, cabbage etc.) or the handling of the food that is the source of contamination. Homemade mayonnaise can be the cause of food poisoning, especially if it contains raw eggs. To make your own mayonnaise safer, be sure to use pasteurized eggs.



For summer food safety information see Rutgers Cooperative Extension fact sheets:

Grilling with Care

- <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1089/> and Jersey Summer Shore Safety <https://njaes.rutgers.edu/fs1196/> or try these websites:
- <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/events/summervacations/index.html>
- <https://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/food-safety-while-hiking-camping-and-boating/>

Small Steps to Buy “Big Ticket” Items

Barbara O’Neill, Ph.D., Rutgers Cooperative Extension Specialist in Financial Resource Management



Most people periodically make “big ticket” purchases. “Big ticket” means that items cost more than consumers can afford from a single paycheck or even a few paychecks, including computers and tablets, furniture, electronics, big screen televisions, appliances, and cars.

With the possible exception of cars, “big ticket” purchases can often be saved for in advance, like any other short-term financial goal. They can also be purchased with a fixed-rate loan or on a credit card. Like cars, big ticket items generally depreciate following a purchase and come with the same buying decisions: new or used, leased or financed, and from a private seller or a retail merchant. Below are ten recommendations to consider if you are planning to buy “big ticket” items:

- ➔ **Develop a Short-Term Savings Plan** – Try to save money to pay cash for items that cost several thousand dollars or less. For example, if \$900 is needed for furniture or \$1,400 for a laptop computer, divide the cost by an amount that can be saved each month (e.g., \$100) to calculate the number of months of required savings (e.g., 9 and 14 months, respectively).
- ➔ **Use Store Layaway Plans** – Set aside items at attractive prices and make periodic payments to the merchant until the full amount to pay in cash is saved and the item can be redeemed. Another option is financing plans that don’t require immediate payment, as long as the payment can be saved before the bill comes due.
- ➔ **Earmark Windfalls** – Purchase “big ticket” items with cash from windfall income such as retroactive pay, freelance or seasonal work, insurance dividends, gifts, prizes, or an income tax refund.
- ➔ **Follow the “Rule of Three”** – Decide key criteria for purchases and compare at least three retailers. Use a three column comparison worksheet to record key details about competing products. Shop during seasonal sales for items that are used for only short time periods each year (e.g., Bar-B-Q grills and snow blowers).
- ➔ **Shop at Alternative Vendor** – Consider less expensive ways to purchase ‘big ticket’ items, especially if funds are limited. Examples include thrift shops, consignment stores, flea markets, eBay, and garage sales. Beware, however, that items will be sold “as is” without a warranty so check them carefully before buying.
- ➔ **Do Pre-Purchase Shopping** – Consult vendor websites, product salespersons, and/or back issues of *Consumer Reports* magazine for product descriptions and recommendations. Also, talk to people who you know that have recently purchased the item(s) that you are looking for.
- ➔ **Purchase Extended Warranties Selectively** – Make decisions on a case-by-case basis. According to *Consumer Reports*, extended warranties may make sense for certain items such as exercise equipment with motors (e.g., treadmills) and laptop computers. These items have high odds of needing repairs within 3 years and most standard warranties are for only a year or less. For other items, however, the odds are much lower that you will collect on extended warranties, which are a high profit item for retailers.
- ➔ **Understand the Cost of Rent-to-Own** – Know the pros and cons. Most rent-to-own contracts run for 78 weeks. Although the weekly price is low, consumers actually end up paying 2 to 4 times the retail cost. For example, a television with a \$500 suggested retail price might cost \$15.95 weekly, or \$1,244.10 for 78 weeks, plus possible delivery or processing fees. A better option would be to save \$16 a week for about 7 months to get the money needed to purchase the television outright. Nevertheless, rent-to-own could make sense for people who move frequently and don’t want to ship or store their personal possessions.
- ➔ **Challenge Yourself to Save** – Savings challenges provide “guardrails” for saving. They provide a suggested dollar amount to save per day or per week toward a defined savings goal. Examples include the 50-Week \$2,500 Savings Challenge, the 15-Week Savings Challenge, and the 52-Week Money Challenge.
- ➔ **Leverage the Power of Social Media** – Follow merchants that you plan to make big ticket purchases from on Facebook and/or Twitter to obtain real time information about markdowns, flash sales, special promo codes, and other ways to save money.



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