

— W H A T A R E — Added Sugars?



Let's start with the basics. Sugars are the simplest type of carbohydrate. They are easily digested and absorbed by the body. Sugars provide calories, or energy, for the body. Each gram of sugar provides 4 calories.

Carbohydrates, along with fat and protein, are macronutrients that provide the body with energy.



Sugars that contain one molecule (monosaccharides) are small enough to be absorbed directly into the bloodstream. Sugars that contain two molecules of sugar linked together (disaccharides) are broken down in your body into single sugars before absorption. Polysaccharides are longer chains of monosaccharides (more than 10) and are also broken down in the body.

Sugars, broken down

Monosaccharides

Glucose

Fructose (levulose or fruit sugar)

Galactose (occurs in milk)

Disaccharides

Sucrose (table sugar) = glucose + fructose

Lactose (milk sugar) = glucose + galactose

Maltose (malt sugar) = glucose + glucose

Polysaccharides

Starch (glucose polymer)

In the body, sugars are broken down into glucose.

- Glucose in the blood (often called "blood sugar") is the primary source of energy for the body.
- Glucose can be used immediately or stored in the liver and muscles for later use.

In foods and beverages, sugars are used to sweeten, preserve, and improve other attributes like texture, color and browning capability.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend limiting added sugars to no more than 10% of calories.¹ This is a target to help individuals move toward healthy eating patterns within calorie limits.

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture. 2015–2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. 8th ed. Available at: <https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>. Published December 2015.

Sugars are found naturally in all plant and dairy foods and beverages and are also added to foods and beverages for taste, texture and preservation. These sugars that are added to foods and beverages during the processing of foods are considered ADDED SUGARS as defined by the FDA. Added sugars do not include low- and non-caloric sweeteners.

The term "added sugars" was defined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2016 as: sugars that are added during the processing of foods, or are packaged as such, and include sugars (free, mono- and disaccharides), sugars from syrups and honey, and sugars from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices that are in excess of what would be expected from the same volume of 100 percent fruit or vegetable juice of the same type.

Some specific examples of FDA's definition of added sugars include:

- agave nectar
- brown rice syrup
- brown sugar
- confectioner's powdered sugar
- coconut sugar
- corn syrup
- dextrose
- fructose*
- glucose*
- high-fructose corn syrup
- honey
- invert sugar
- lactose*
- malt syrup
- maltose*
- maple sugar
- molasses
- nectars (e.g. peach nectar, pear nectar)
- raw sugar
- rice syrup
- sucrose*
- sugar
- white granulated sugar

*also naturally occurring sugars found in whole foods



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