

Posted June 13, 2015

Sugar Intake: Proceed with caution

Americans are steadily consuming more and more added sugars in their diets, thus contributing to excess weight gain which can ultimately result in obesity. In fact, BMI data collected across the county on first-sixth grade students by the Jackson County Community Health Action Team indicates that 39 percent have an 'AT RISK' weight that can lead to other detrimental health issues such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, depression, certain cancers, and fatty-liver disease. Something to be aware of—there are two types of sugars in American diets: naturally occurring sugars and added sugars.

Naturally occurring sugars are found naturally in foods such as fruit (fructose) and milk (lactose) - these foods provide valuable nutrients and should be included as part of a healthy diet.

Added sugars include any sugars or caloric sweeteners that are added to foods or beverages during processing or preparation (such as putting sugar in your coffee or adding sugar to your cereal). Added sugars (or added sweeteners) can include natural sugars such as white sugar, brown sugar and honey as well as other caloric sweeteners that are chemically manufactured (such as high fructose corn syrup) - these are the sugars that we need to limit, as they provide no nutritional value. The American Heart Association recommends limiting the amount of added sugars you consume to no more than half of your daily discretionary calorie allowance. For most American women, this is no more than 100 calories per day and no more than 150 calories per day for men (or about 6 teaspoons per day for women and 9 teaspoons per day for men). To put this in perspective, one 12 oz. can of soda provides 10 teaspoons of sugar.

One source reveals that the average American child consumes >32 teaspoons of sugar per day and the average adult about 22 teaspoons daily. Both are well above the American Heart Association recommendation for daily added sugar intake.

“Beware of mixed messaging on food labels such as ‘Made with Real Fruit’ or ‘celebrity endorsements’ warns Registered Dietitian, Kerri Metz of the Jackson County Health Department. According to an article in the journal *Pediatrics*, researchers say that previous studies have shown that parents are more likely to buy foods that are marketed by pro-athletes, as they are seen to be ‘healthier.’ Metz continued, “By avoiding the hype and reading nutrition labels we can ensure that we are providing our children with the most nutritious items with limited additives.”

For more information on a healthier diet and limiting sugar consumption contact the Jackson County Health Department at 482-7308 or visit ShapeYourFutureOK.com.