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Research Finds Sugar Changes Metabolism in Even the Healthiest of People

By Dr. Mercola | October 25th, 2017

Sugar is likely one of the most dangerous products you can ingest and may trigger an addiction that is difficult to break. What is so terrifying is that you can find it in almost every processed food you purchase. It hides under a number of different names and affects your body in ways that scientists are continuing to discover. While the media and medical associations have warned about overeating fat and salt, there has been relatively little said about the overabundance of sugar in the American diet.

The sad truth is there are copious numbers of studies spanning decades that demonstrate the damage sugar does to your health, but the industry has managed to bury the evidence, and claim sugar has little to no effect on your health or your weight.

According to one recent study, consumption of sugar is responsible for as much as 40 percent of health care dollars spent each year. In the U.S. more than \$1 trillion is spent fighting obesity, heart disease, diabetes, and cancer. All of these diseases are related to the excessive consumption of sugar.

The foods you eat have an immense impact on your brain, gut health and cellular metabolism, all which impact your health and daily ability to be productive at home and work. Historically, sugar was a treat enjoyed only on special occasions. Today, it's found in almost everything you eat, short of whole foods. It's in processed foods of all kinds, snacks, drinks, sauces, breads, condiments and deli meats. Even infant formula and baby food is loaded with sugar, which triggers the brain's reward center, increasing desire for more.

Research quite clearly shows that refined sugar in excessive amounts promotes mitochondrial dysfunction. These little powerhouses provide the energy for your cells, so when they cease to function normally, any number of functions throughout your body may be disrupted. Now, researchers have confirmed that sugar damages cellular function no matter how healthy you were before you began eating poorly.

Sugar — A Driving Force Behind the Leading Causes of Death

The sugar added to one 6-ounce soda is enough to increase your risk of obesity, Type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and cardiovascular disease if you drink it every day. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates the average American gets 16 percent of their daily calories from sugar, or as much as 30 teaspoons a day, which is three times the recommended amount. This is equal to eating 35 5-pound bags of sugar every year.

Manufacturers have used the addictive property of sugar to drive sales of their products, and the use of high fructose corn syrup to get more bang for their buck. High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is not only cheaper for manufacturers to use, it also gives your body a bigger sugar jolt. Dr. Yulia Johnson, family medicine physician with the Iowa Clinic, comments on the use of HFCS: *"Your body processes high fructose corn syrup differently than it does ordinary sugar. The burden falls on your liver, which is not capable of keeping up with how quickly corn syrup breaks down. As a result, blood sugar spikes quicker. It's stored as fat, so you can become obese and develop other health problems, such as diabetes, much faster."*

The danger to growing children is even greater as their bodies cannot handle the amount of sugar they get from candy, processed foods and sugary drinks, and they have many more years of sugar consumption during which they damage their mitochondria and cellular metabolism — damage that has been linked to many of the leading causes of death, including:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- Atherosclerosis
- Chronic liver disease
- Cancer
- Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease

Sugar Associated With an Increased Risk of Depression

Sugar is also associated with an increased risk of depression. It stands to reason that as sugar adversely affects your brain, it may trigger damage that affects your mood and behavior. Several studies have found an association between rising sugar intake and an increase in depression rates.

There are several ways sugar contributes to mood changes. For starters, sugar increases insulin resistance, which plays a significant role in your mental health. Over the long term, this creates a chronic inflammatory response in your body. In one cross-cultural analysis, the researchers concluded the dietary predictors of outcome for depression and schizophrenia are very similar to those that predict diabetes and heart disease. They all involve a chronic inflammatory response, of which sugar is a primary driver.

Researchers have also found a significant association between addiction and mood disorders, including depression. In a study that tracked the dietary habits and medical conditions of 8,000 people over 22 years, researchers found that men who consumed 67 grams or more of sugar per day were 23 percent more likely to be diagnosed with depression in five years than those consuming 40 grams or less. None of the participants had been treated for mental illness at the start of the study.

The effect of sugar on mental health appeared to be independent of socioeconomic status, physical activity, drinking, smoking or other eating habits.

Sugar impacts the function of dopamine in your brain, the neurotransmitter that triggers your reward system, in the same way narcotics affect your brain, and may trigger a strong addictive response. Since addiction and mood disorders have been linked, and sugar fuels powerful mood changes associated with addiction, researchers who have analyzed the biochemical and neurological effects of sugar concluded it may be as addictive as cocaine for some people.

As Health Insurance Rates Rise, Your Best Insurance May Be to Avoid Sugar

Research from many of the most respected institutions around the world confirms sugar is a primary factor driving the development of chronic diseases and contributes to the leading causes of death, including cancer and heart disease. It stands to reason, if you want to reduce your health care costs, it is best to avoid sugar as much as possible, if not eliminate it from your diet completely.

While eating whole, organic foods is the best thing you can do for your health, when you do pick up packaged foods, read the labels carefully so you can make an informed decision about the amount of sugar you are adding to your diet. Keep in mind there are many different types of sugars that may go unnoticed on labels. Below is a list of some of the more common sugars, but there are more names for sugar than are listed here.

- Fruit juice concentrate
- Sorghum syrup
- Rice syrup
- Maple syrup
- Malt syrup
- Corn syrup molasses
- Turbinado
- Buttered syrup
- Barley malt
- Evaporated cane juice
- Sucanat
- Galactose
- Carob syrup
- Dextrose
- Caramel
- Diastatic malt
- Fruit juice
- Corn syrup
- Cane juice crystals
- Florida crystal
- Glucose solids
- Golden syrup
- Lactose
- Brown rice syrup
- Ethyl maltol
- Honey
- Refiner's syrup
- D-ribose