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The Bitter Face of Sugar

This is the third in a series of articles on food and optimal health

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Refined sugar is everywhere. Apart from desserts, candies, and soda drinks, you would be sure to find it in most store bought sauces, snacks, condiments, juices, frozen meals, packet and canned soups, breads, cereals, and hundreds of other processed and packaged foods.

When it comes to our health, we all know that an excess of sugar is likely to make us gain weight, which leads to a host of health problems. Yet, another major concern with sugar is that it suppresses your immune system. A suppressed immune system leads to a weakening of the body's defense against infections and disease. To compound matters, bacterial and viral infections feed on sugar, as does Candida (an overgrowth of fungus in your system in the form of yeast, or yeast infections). Research has also shown that sugar contributes to cancer.

Other affects of an excess of simple sugars (include refined sugars) are mood swings, anxiety, headaches, hypertension, development of food allergies, digestive problems, osteoporosis, heart disease, and hypoglycemia, not to mention that an excess of simple sugars can contribute to diabetes. Another reason to cut back on sugar is that it can speed up the aging process and lead to premature wrinkling.

Highly refined sugars are completely stripped of any nutritional value and can cause vitamin and mineral deficiencies, in addition to interfering with the absorption of nutrients.

An excess of sugar can be detrimental to your health. Limit your intake of refined sugars. Curb your sugar cravings by including foods in your diet that are naturally sweet. These foods include whole grains (such as brown rice), root vegetables (such as sweet potatoes, potatoes, carrots, and turnips), and fruits (limit your intake of dried fruit). Keep in mind that smaller fruits have less sugar than larger fruits, so berries are an excellent choice, and they are loaded with disease-fighting phytochemicals. Also, eat smaller portion meals at regular intervals, which should keep your blood sugar in check so you don't succumb to cravings.

Be sure to read food labels and know what other terms to recognize as refined sugar. Refined sugars come in the form of sucrose (white table sugar, cane sugar), high fructose corn syrup, dextrose (corn sugar), maltose, and molasses. For those of you who use brown sugar, don't be fooled! Brown sugar is just as refined as white sugar, except that molasses has been added, and in some cases, brown sugar is simply white sugar that has undergone a colorization process.

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