

The Sugar Story

Sucrose, glucose, dextrose, high fructose corn syrup, fructose are all considered part of the sugar family. Wow, how confusing. Sugar has been a hot topic for some time and is intensely debated in the diet industry, cut it, lower it, and alter its state etc. One type of sugar in particular has been blamed for the ever increasing obesity epidemic in this country is high fructose corn syrup (HFCS). I am hoping to clear up some of the mysteries surrounding the sugar family and HFCS in particular. If you ever take a minute and look at some of the labels of the food and drink you are consuming you will see HFCS in everything. Some products include, bread, cereal, pop, juices, power drinks, cookies, cakes, and snack food.

HFCS was invented in 1966 by corn farmers trying to improve their crop sales. HFCS is cheap to make, cheap to process and is 10 times sweeter than regular raw sugar so companies that use sugar in their products can buy more and use less. HFCS comes in liquid form and is found in almost all processed foods.

Sugar in general circulates in the blood stream as glucose which about 290 grams of glucose can be stored in the muscles and liver. Our bodies can use stored glucose as a quick energy source for about one hour of continuous exercise. When we consume sugar in any form causes the pancreas to release insulin which drives sugar from the bloodstream into the cells. But in turn the glucose also causes your fat cells to release a hormone called leptin. The leptin hormone tells your brain that you have had enough so you stop eating or eat less. This is why HFCS has become such a devastating factor in the obesity epidemic because HFCS does **not** cause fat cells to release leptin so you remain hungry and eat more.

So the key is, if you are watching what you eat, striving for a healthy lifestyle make sure you educate yourself on what you are eating by reading labels. If any type of sugar is in the first 3 ingredients, you are consuming large amounts of refined sugar many examples may include sucrose, honey, glucose, molasses, dextrose, corn sweetener, fructose, HFCS, lactose, maltose, sorghum syrup, mannitol, fruit juice concentrate, and sorbitol. Reducing your sugar intake and especially HFCS will help you cut calories and will allow your body more room for nutritious foods. If too much sugar is consumed the body will eventually be forced to draw upon its own source of vitamins and minerals. Once that source is depleted the possibility of metabolic diseases has a chance to set in like insulin resistance (diabetes), high cholesterol, high blood pressure, and of course obesity.

Counting out sugars all together is not the answer either; the brain operates on glucose 24 hours a day. Nourish your body by giving it complex (sugar) carbohydrates, which is harder for your body to break down instead of simple (sugar) carbohydrates which only proceeds to rob the body of nutrients. Learn how to distinguish between simple (refined and processed) and complex carbohydrates (whole grains) and how they affect your body. Everything in moderation but it helps to know the facts. Continue to educate yourself. Healthy Minds = Healthy Bodies!!