



## 'New Me' Food - What You Need To Know About Sugar

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I strongly believe what you eat makes you the person you are. I've begun my journey into nutrition few years ago. Now, with satisfaction I must say I am a stronger, healthier and happier - definitely more aware person than I was back then. From an overweight and 'bit depressed woman, I became a 'superwoman and supermom'.

I get up with lots of energy and I go to sleep writing this article with more energy to spare. This metamorphosis however, hasn't happened over night. Lots of effort, research came into making the 'new me'. It was and STILL IS a long voyage with lots of milestones. This story covers one of them - breaking my Diet Soda habit. Today's article is all about the sweet side of our lives;-)

It was a beautiful sunny Sunday morning. I just came back from a walk along the seaside, grabbed a can of Diet Coke, set on my sofa and started reading Sunday's paper. All of the sudden I have spotted an article on artificial sweeteners. I got interested specially when I new, that lots of foods I ate back then contained them. The article was brief and general and left me unsatisfied and hungry for some more explanation. As I kept reading more doubts came to my mind. I have realised soon why. After reading some more on the subject, that can of diet soda was my last one...

So, at first - let's start with some sugary facts:

Sugar, like fat, gets a lot of sour press, some deserved, some not. Babies are born with a sweet tooth. Human milk is quite sweet, so a child begins life making the connection between eating, drinking, and pleasure. Sugars are one form of carbohydrates. Carbohydrates as we know are your body's main source of energy. You couldn't exist without them. Carbohydrates are a group of nutrients that contain carbon atoms that have been hydrated by adding water molecules. Carbohydrates are actually built of sugar molecules, called saccharine. They're arranged like beads on a necklace. Carbohydrates include sugars, starches, and fiber.

Nutritionally speaking, there is no such thing as a bad sugar, since all digestible sugars provide energy to the body. It doesn't matter to an individual cell in what form the glucose came into the body (as a chocolate, piece of fruit or bread). Yet, simple and complex carbohydrates behave differently in the body. There are three main sources of Sugar that we consume on a daily bases:

**1. COMPLEX CARBS** -The best carbs are those that not only provide a steady supply of energy, but also bring other nutrients the body needs - complex carbs. The worst carbs come in packages with few other nutrients, except perhaps fat, and cause the blood sugar, and often a person's mood, to be unstable -simple carbs.

Complex carbohydrates are found in grains, vegetables, and legumes -- foods that provide vitamins, minerals, and fiber as well as energy. You get a lot of nutritional bang for your buck with complex carbs.



**2. FRUCTOSE SUGARS** - Simple mono saccharides rather than complex carbohydrates. They come in packages - fruits - that contain important nutrients and fibre. Fruit sugars provide quick energy, but do not excite the blood sugar roller coaster because the fibre slows absorption of the sugars. Unlike the simple sugar glucose that quickly enters the bloodstream, fructose sugar has to go to the liver before it is released into the bloodstream and carried to the body's cells. Since fructose is the preferred source of glycogen (sugars stored in the liver), it is a valuable energy food before and after long periods of exercise.

**3. SIMPLE (JUNK) SUGAR** - Junk sugars are called simple carbohydrates because they are short, uncomplicated molecules. Because simple sugars are already so small, they require little or no breaking down in the intestines. The sucrose molecule is quickly broken down into glucose and fructose, and all that glucose is actively pumped through the intestinal cells quickly into the bloodstream. A sprinkle of sugar that hits the intestines enters the bloodstream almost immediately. They are the ones responsible for rapid sugar blood changes in our bodies resulting in our changing behavior and most likely extra pounds.

### Now, Artificial Sugars:

Artificial sweeteners (e.g. aspartame, saccharine) were originally developed as a sugar substitute for diabetics. Manufacturer however, discovered what a huge market in a calorie-conscious society, artificial sweeteners are. On the outside it all looks fine. What is wrong with craving the taste but not the calories? you can ask. Well, Let's look a little closer, shall we?

The sad truth is that Our Body does not react to the artificial sweeteners as it does to natural sugar in carbohydrates. The sweeteners do not satisfy a body that is craving sweets or carbohydrates. In fact, they may so accustom the taste buds to sweet flavours that sweetener-users want more sugar rather than less. Which is the opposite reaction we want, isn't it?

Also, some scientists are concerned about biochemical quirks of artificial sweeteners. The sweetener aspartame (NutraSweet) is basically a combination of two amino acids, aspartic acid and phenylalanine. Amino acids have different effects on the brain than sugars do. In natural foods these amino acids enter the brain in company with other naturally- occurring nutrients. The amino acids on their own may have an unnatural effect, particularly on neurotransmitters. Theoretically, it is also possible that the amino acids in the artificial sweeteners could compete with the natural amino acids in the foods, throwing the brain's neurotransmitters out of balance. Common sense says that feeding the brain an unnatural substance may cause it to perform in an unnatural way.

Now, the the blending of sweeteners which is happening more often nowadays is presenting a whole new set of problems. Research has not been done, and is not required to be done, on combinations of sweeteners. There is no way to know what happens to the chemicals once they are combined in the products or how they are processed in our bodies in that combination. This is an unnecessary risk that is being taken. The proper procedure would be to require thorough, credible studies on the safety of these combinations before allowing them into our food and medicine. While it would take time and money to conduct these tests, it's clearly a case where it's better to be safe than sorry.

Well, I do think that eating, drinking, breathing anything artificial is not wise - period. You know what they say: 'WHEN IN DOUBT, LEAVE IT OUT!' ;-)

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