



# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUGARS AND NATURAL SUGARS?

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*Being a student can be stressful and exhausting at times—especially during midterms and finals when it is hard to not reach for that sweet treat when you are in a pinch and have a craving for something sweet. Sometimes it may seem like the only thing that will make studying more enjoyable would be to have a cookie or piece of chocolate. But what does eating that sweet treat actually do to your health? How do you distinguish between added sugars versus natural sugars, and what do those tricky food labels really mean?*

## Added Sugars

Added sugars are sweeteners that are added to foods and not naturally occurring. They also go through some form of processing. Foods with added sugars include: desserts, chocolate, ice cream, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, candy, sodas, juices, foods with high fructose corn syrup, and juice concentrates. The body digests added sugary foods very quickly, which gives you energy for a short amount of time. If you eat foods with added sugars you can have a blood sugar spike, and then immediately crash, which is why it isn't the best option when you need to be focused during class or when you need to pull an all-nighter to study for midterms or finals. Added sugars are one of the leading contributing factors to type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, so it's important to monitor your intake.



## Natural Sugars

Natural sugars, on the other hand, are sugars that occur naturally in whole foods. Sources of natural sugars are milk (lactose), fruits (fructose), and some vegetables. The body works hard to digest natural sugar containing foods that also have fiber, so that you have long-lasting energy that also keeps you fuller for longer. Fruits like apples, oranges, berries, dates or even dried fruits like prunes and mangoes have fiber and contain natural sugar. Vegetables with natural sugars include sweet potatoes, beets, carrots, onions, peas, corn, pumpkin, squash, tomatoes, and more. These vegetables also have fiber, which give you energy that lasts longer, vitamins, and other healthy nutrients. Milk, for example, contains vitamin D and calcium, and many fruits and vegetables contain vitamin A and vitamin C. So, next time you want to have a sweet treat, maybe consider reaching for a dried mango slice or a side of sweet potatoes sprinkled with cinnamon and see how you feel afterwards!



## How much added sugar should you consume?

The American Heart Association recommends that the amount of added sugars consumed on a daily basis does not exceed half of your daily calorie allotment.

Here's another way to look at it: for men, the daily limit is 9 teaspoons (about 36 grams) of added sugars, and for women it is 6 teaspoons (about 24 grams). To assess how many teaspoons of sugar you consumed on any given day, take the grams of sugar on a nutrition label and divide it by 4.

## Tricky Food Labels

Sometimes food labels can mislead consumers about the actual sugar content. Below are various terms that are often found on nutrition labels, so keep these in mind next time you are trying to decide which treat to eat.

**Sugar-Free:** contains less than 0.5 grams of sugar per serving

**Reduced Sugar or Less Sugar:** contains a minimum of 25% less sugars per serving as compared to a standard serving size

**No Added Sugars or Without Added Sugars:** contains no added sugars (i.e., at no point during the preparation or processing was sugar added)

**Low Sugar:** this is not defined or even allowed as a statement on food labels

## Names for Added Sugars

Here are some examples of names of different types of added sugars. Look for them on ingredient lists.

- Agave Syrup
- Brown Sugar
- Brown Rice Syrup
- Cane Juice and Cane Syrup
- Coconut Sugar
- Confectioners' Sugar
- Corn Sweetener and Corn Syrup
- Dextrose
- Fructose
- Fruit Juice Concentrates
- Glucose
- Granulated White Sugar
- High-Fructose Corn Syrup
- Honey
- Invert Sugar
- Lactose
- Maltose
- Malt syrup
- Molasses
- Raw sugar
- Sucrose
- Syrup

