

How Sweet It Is Not

High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is a sweetener that is made by changing glucose (sugar) to fructose. HFCS is cheaper than sugar and it gives processed foods a longer shelf life. HFCS can be found in many sodas, juices, and other processed foods (Mayo Clinic, 2008). HFCS provides calories but does not provide any vitamins, minerals, fibers, fats, or proteins (Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), 2008). All sweeteners contain glucose and fructose. HFCS contains fifty-five percent fructose and forty-five percent glucose where as table sugar contains an equal fifty percent of glucose and fructose (Boyles, 2009).

A study was conducted by the University of California at Davis on thirty-two overweight and obese men and women. The participants were broken up into two groups and over a ten week period the groups drank either beverages sweetened with fructose or beverages sweetened with glucose. This accounted for twenty-five percent of their calorie intake. The study showed that both groups gained weight but those that drank the fructose drink gained their fat in the belly while the glucose group gained their fat under the skin. Belly fat has been linked as a greater risk factor for heart disease and diabetes (Boyles, 2009). The study was not conducted with a very wide sample but it gave some distinct findings for researchers to use to explore HFCS and other sugars even more. Many times people are not looking at what is used to make the beverage or food that they are consuming; therefore, they tend to eat and drink items with HFCS and not even know it.

Before 1970, the amount of sugar intake among Americans was very small. Since 1970, there has been a nineteen percent increase in the intake of sweeteners in America. This is because sugar, HFCS, and other sweeteners have been put into so many foods that we consume

on a daily basis. Americans now eat 523 extra calories a day and of those 523 extra calories 76 come from HFCS and other sugars (PBS, 2008).

There are many things that we can do to watch our intake of HFCS as well as other sweeteners. To help watch your intake of HFCS try and cut back on soda intake by drinking water, milk, and juices that are not fruit-flavored. These drinks offer the nutrition that we all need as well as cutting out the sugar intake that we do not need. Believe it or not, 100 percent fruit juices also have a high amount of sugar in them.

Limit the amount of processed foods you eat on a daily basis. Try to eat fresh foods and deli meats. Cooking instead of eating fast food or ready to eat meals is always a good idea. Eat plenty of fresh fruit or fruit that is in its own juices instead of fruit that is canned in heavy syrup. Last but not least limit the amount of foods that you eat that contain added sugar (Mayo Clinic, 2008). This can be very hard because of all of the good tasting food has added sugar but it can really affect our bodies in the long run.

The next time you are out at the grocery store read the nutrition labels and pay attention to what you are buying. You may be surprised as to how much high fructose corn syrup is in your daily food intake.

References

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