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The Truth About Sugar: What Your Body Really Needs

Sugar-free diets get a lot of attention—but the truth is, not all sugar is the same, and no single approach works for everyone. Understanding the different types of sugar can help you make smarter, more balanced choices.



The Two Types of Sugar in Foods

Naturally Occurring Sugars

Naturally occurring sugars are found in whole foods that also provide important nutrients, such as:

- Fruit (fructose)
- Milk and dairy products (lactose)

These foods supply vitamins, minerals, and fiber that support overall health.

Added Sugars and Sweeteners

Added sugars are sugars or caloric sweeteners added during food processing or preparation—like sugar in coffee, cereal, or baked goods. These include:

- White sugar, brown sugar, and honey
- Artificial and non-nutritive sweeteners such as aspartame, monk fruit extract, saccharin, sucralose, stevia, acesulfame potassium (Ace-K), and cyclamate
- Sugar alcohols like erythritol, xylitol, and sorbitol

Many of these sweeteners are commonly used in diet or “zero-sugar” beverages to provide sweetness without calories.

Why Your Body Needs Sugar

Sugar isn't inherently bad—in fact, **your body depends on it for energy**. When you eat carbohydrates, your body breaks them down into glucose (a form of sugar), which:

- Circulates in your bloodstream
- Is taken into cells to fuel your brain, muscles, and organs

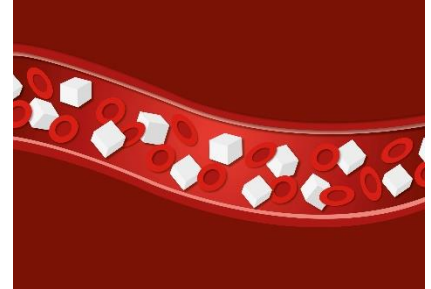


Eliminating all natural sources of sugar and carbohydrates can negatively affect your health. Instead, the goal is to be thoughtful about where sweetness comes from in your diet.

Blood Sugar, Insulin, and Energy

As glucose moves through the bloodstream, insulin helps transport it into cells where it can be used for energy. Most people can maintain healthy blood sugar through:

- Balanced nutrition
- Regular physical activity
- Stress management
- Quality sleep



When Blood Sugar Becomes a Problem

In Type 2 diabetes, glucose stays in the bloodstream instead of entering cells because:

- The body develops insulin resistance, making insulin less effective
- The pancreas gradually produces less insulin

Over time, this can lead to elevated blood sugar levels.

Blood Sugar Guidelines (American Heart Association)

Fasting Blood Glucose	Diagnosis	What It Means
Lower than 100 mg/dL	Normal	Healthy range
100–125 mg/dL	Prediabetes (impaired fasting glucose)	Increased risk of developing diabetes
126 mg/dL or higher	Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2 Diabetes)	Increased risk of heart disease or stroke

Resources

- [Johns Hopkins Medicine – Facts About Sugar and Sugar Substitutes](#)
- [American Heart Association – Sugar 101](#)