

Sugar: Sweet and Dangerous

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Sugar – a topic that is difficult to deal with because sugar in the diet of the western world after hundreds of years of use is so deeply entrenched.

Why would anyone question sugar now? There are so many more important health issues to be concerned with: big ones with heart attacks and cancer the first two that come to mind.

A medical doctor, John Yudkin, for thirty years, a professor of Psychology, Nutrition and Dietetics at a London university, says in his book *Sugar: Sweet and Dangerous*: "If only a fraction of what is already known about the effects of sugar were to be revealed in relation to any other material used as a food additive, that material would be promptly banned..."¹

Dr. Yudkin's book tells us much we've already suspected and, through years of research, facts we really don't want to know. We feel we have the "sugar thing" under control; after all, we brush our teeth twice a day, a habit we learned as children so our sweets wouldn't "eat holes in our teeth."

We believe the obesity epidemic in America is the result of the intake of more calories than we're able to burn off. Somewhere in the back of the mind we have to admit that quite a few of those calories are coming from sugar and sweets. But we can get a handle on that one with a switch to a low-fat, low-carb diet with plenty of "sugar free" beverages to fill in the empty spaces. Right?

To say the very least, it's not "working" for us. While frustration builds, the health of this country, which according to the World Health Organization was once number one in the world is on a downswing. By the year 2000 the U.S. was listed 24th, an unsettling revelation not to mention, embarrassing.

Let's back up to see if we can make sense of all this. To begin with, despite all the advertising of the sugar industry, sugar is not "natural". Table sugar or sucrose is *manufactured* from sugar cane or sugar beets going through a *refining process* to become a pure white crystalline substance, which the body can't "read" because it's no longer "natural" but a *chemical*. The human body was designed to "read" the energy of the natural sugars in fruit, grains and even vegetables and it responds by signaling us when we've had enough. Dates are a natural sweet and if you had a bag full you probably couldn't eat more

than a few. On the other hand, a bag full of chocolates isn't "filling" because the system has no sense of satiation or fullness when it's dealing with a chemical substance which gets stored away in fat tissues to be dealt with at a later time.²

If sugars are "natural" until they are unrefined, is there any problem including unrefined sugars as part of a healthy diet? Indeed not; these simple carbohydrates provide quick energy to the body as they are processed into glucose or blood sugar, which is also a *primary fuel for the brain*. "Carbohydrates" has become a bad word as the food industry pushes its low-carb (quote, unquote) "foods" on an unsuspecting public. The trade off for what they say is weight control can be exhaustion of both body and mind. The best help is *natural* carbohydrates, *real food* in the form of whole grains, potatoes and winter squash, beans and lentils, apples, pears and bananas, all loaded with fiber to slow down their digestion and therefore their conversion to glucose or blood sugar.

In nature, sugar is rarely found in a concentrated form. However, over the past fifty years, the food industry has tried to outsmart nature with a proliferation of new products, most of which contain sugar in some form or another.

The health of our nation has been plummeting with the use of refined sugar; with a record 120 plus pounds eaten annually for every man, woman and child. Worldwide it's the wealthiest countries that show higher sugar consumption than the poorer or more primitive ones who, by the way, have better health – and beautiful teeth.

Gelatins, soft drinks, cereals and pre-sweetened beverages are being artificially sweetened with Equal or NutraSweet, the trade name for aspartame, and the most complained about products in the history of the FDA. Initially this product was rejected by the FDA because at 86° Fahrenheit, it breaks down into carcinogens, one of them formaldehyde, which we know as embalming fluid. Aspartame has been implicated in birth defects, brain tumors, and neurotoxicity long suspected in the cases of ADD and ADHD, the PKO disorder in newborns which interferes with DNA replication. Political maneuvering overcame the resistance and aspartame joined other dangerous non-foods at your neighborhood grocery.

Splenda, the trade name for sucralose is made by chlorinating sugar, despite the fact that research on animals showed shrunken thymus glands, enlarged livers and kidneys, reduced growth rate and complications during pregnancy. Saccharine has been around for over seventy years, even though it is a suspected carcinogen. Obviously switching to artificial sweeteners isn't the answer to our cravings for sweets.

It's interesting to note that the human body has a built in "sensing system" to let us know when something is wrong. When energy drops to dangerous levels in brain and body there are unmistakable symptoms: feeling weak, spacey and dizzy, faint or shaky, headachy. Sudden hunger, sweating and mental confusion are also common signs of trouble; the stressed out adrenals are screaming for attention. I can remember when we were instructed to have a sweetened drink or eat a candy bar. It worked like a miracle – all the symptoms disappeared in minutes! But what happened next was a "ping-pong" effect with blood sugar bouncing out of control. With too much sugar/glucose in the blood the pancreas is stimulated to release insulin to pull down the blood sugar to a normal level. Eventually the pancreas becomes exhausted/damaged with little or no insulin output to bring sugar levels back to normal. But then, we always can fall back on pancreas medication (insulin) to control the high blood sugar, which comes with it's own set of negatives.

Is it any wonder that we're experiencing an epidemic of diabetes, both childhood and adult onset, with its resultant weight gain as the excess glucose is "stored" for later use. Our country's obesity epidemic may well be rooted in our exhausted adrenals and increased malfunction of the pancreas and all the "sweets" it takes to keep them going.

The list of symptoms that plague the body because of a diet high in refined sugar goes on and on. In fact, you have to wonder how one item could cause such widespread and varied damage. The answer is rather simple; sugar causes, as all chemicals do, *an acid reaction in the body's chemistry signaling a breaking down of homeostasis*, the health of first the cells then organs and systems. An acid body pH means trouble:

- An acid mouth eats away at the teeth. There is little peristaltic action in the digestion tract and colon so food and wastes don't move, clogging the system and leaching very acidic fecal matter back into the blood and lymph systems.
- An acid system means irritation of mucus membranes throughout the body (sinus and allergy symptoms, post nasal drips, sore throat).
- Acid blood steals sodium, from the stomach lining and joints, then calcium from the bones to buffer the blood back to alkalinity. The health of the body is ultimately dependent on the blood being *slightly alkaline*.
- Pancreas and adrenal involvement means the endocrine loop is no longer intact, disrupting the flow of the "messenger" the glands send out for *a normally functioning body*.

These are only the *major symptoms* in the body's fight to stay alive under a constant barrage of acid producing sugars and their chemical substances. We know that once there is an understanding of a problem it's much

easier to find a solution. The "root cause" of America's love affair with sugar might be chalked up to adrenal stress brought on, more often than not, by our hectic life style where "easier" is almost never "better".

"Hidden sugar" is the menace; the industry lists sugar in the ingredients multiple times using different names, which may not be recognized as "sugar". We know that high placement on the list shows a greater amount of an ingredient, unless, of course, it goes in under several different names like "fructose", "sucrose", (table sugar), "lactose", "glucose", "maltose". Sugar alcohols join the list with names like "sorbitol", "mannitol" and "xylitol".

Step by step changes can be made to return health to anyone willing to put forth the effort so here are some suggestions to help you get started:

- Share your concerns with your family – younger is better, but it's never too late.
- Make a decision together to change and make a plan on how to accomplish your goal by a specified date.
- Brain storm ideas for a "dump-the-sugar-bowl" ceremony.
- Read the labels and clean out cupboards and refrigerator.
- Switch from sugar drinks to juice (then water).
- Try "natural" snacks.
- Let children take turns to be the special one to plan menus/go shopping, choose new foods, and help "cook".

There's nothing more important that you can teach your family than how to stay healthy. Change is never easy, and it does take time, but the rewards will be a lifetime of something money can't buy – your health.

References:

1 John Yudkin, M.D., Ph.D. *"Sugar: Sweet and Dangerous"* (Bantam 1973)

2 Carol Keppler, B.S., Ed., *intuited Research*

3 *Tree of Life Publications* (Vol. 15, No.7)