

'Hidden' Sugar and Its Effect on Teeth

Submitted by:

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As Americans, we consume a lot of sugar. Many of our processed food and drinks have 'hidden' sugars that can have an impact on our health. Undoubtedly, our dental health is substantially impacted by sugar, along with other carbohydrates that feed the cavity-causing bacteria in our mouths.

The World Health Organization's (WHO) new 2015 guideline for 'free sugar' (sugar that has been added to food and naturally occurring sugar in honey, syrups, and fruit juices/concentrates) intake for both adults and children recommends, "...reducing the intake of free sugars to less than 10% of total energy intake." For an average person that would equate to be approximately 50 g of sugar per day. To put that into perspective, one 12 oz. can of Coca-Cola has 39 g of sugar.

The 2015 WHO guideline states, "... adults who consume less sugars have lower body weight and... increasing the amount of sugars in the diet is associated with a comparable weight increase. In addition, research shows that children with the highest intakes of sugar-sweetened drinks are more likely to be overweight or obese than children with a low intake of sugar-sweetened drinks."

The WHO guideline research further proves that, "... higher rates of dental caries (cavities) when the intake of free sugars is above 10% of total energy intake compared with an intake of free sugars below 10% of total energy intake."

One aspect in reducing the risk of cavities is to decrease the frequency and duration of sugar exposure to teeth. Products such as soda, candy, and other obvious sugar-laden foods and drinks should be limited. However, there are many other products that have 'hidden' sugars in them. Listed below are a few surprising examples of the amount of sugar in food and drinks.

Product	Sugar (g)	Product	Sugar (g)
Yoplait Strawberry Yogurt	27	Kellog's Cracklin' Oat Bran (3/4 cup)	15
Yoplait Lemon 99% Fat Free Yogurt	31	Heinz Original Tomato Soup	14.9
Reduced Fat Free Oreos (3 cookies)	14	Snapple Lemon Iced Tea (8 oz.)	23
Oreos (3 cookies)	14	CapriSun Pacific Cooler (1 pouch)	18
Raisins (1 42.3g serving)	30	Red Bull Energy Drink (8.3 oz. can)	27
Healthy Valley Organic Cereal Bar	14	KC Masterpiece BBQ sauce (2 tbsp.)	12
2 Frosted Cherry Pop Tarts	34	Heinz Tomato Ketchup (2 tbsp.)	8

I would like to challenge readers to become more aware of the sugar intake of both you and your family. I also would encourage becoming more informed about the type of food and its possible effects on your oral and systemic health. Please consult your dentist and physician for further information on how sugar affects your oral and systemic health, respectively. In addition, the WHO's 2015 Guideline: Sugars Intake for Adult and Children can be accessed for free online to learn more.

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