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# The Scoop On Sugar

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Someone may have told you that people with diabetes can't eat any sugar. Some people even think that eating too much sugar causes diabetes in the first place. Such ideas make sugar sound like a "bad guy." But sugar is not evil. It's just a type of carbohydrate.



It is true that eating a lot of sugary foods is not a good idea. For one thing, it's bad for your teeth. For another, many sweets have a lot of sugar and fat, and not very many vitamins and minerals. They take up space in your meal plan (and your stomach!) that would be better filled with nutritious foods. Candy, cake, and other treats should just be occasional treats.

Doctors used to tell people with diabetes to stay away from sugar. They thought eating sugar would elevate your blood glucose too quickly. We know that all carbohydrates affect your blood glucose about the same way. A potato and a brownie, if they have the same number of carbohydrates, have about the same affect on your blood glucose. Of course, a potato has more vitamins than a brownie, so it's a better food choice.

If you want to put that brownie (or ice cream, cookies, or whatever) in your meal plan, talk to your parents and your dietitian or doctor about it. You probably can't eat ice cream after every meal. Perhaps you can have it once a week, like after your soccer games on Saturdays. Remember, there are no forbidden foods - and no bad guys - in a healthy meal plan. The key is to plan ahead so your treats affect only your taste buds, not your blood glucose control.

## "Sugar-Free"

Some people with diabetes like to use sugar-replacements in their foods and beverages. For some things, it makes a lot of sense. Like soda. There's a lot of carbohydrate and sugar in a can of soda, so if you want to drink one without having to put it in your meal plan, you need to drink the kind with sugar replacements in it, the "diet" version.

But beware of those "free" foods. Lots of people think that "sugar-free" or "fat-free" means "carbohydrate free." That's not necessarily true. When it comes to managing diabetes, it's not about how much sugar (or fat) is in a product. It's all about carbohydrates.

Let's take an example: vanilla ice cream. You can have one ½ cup serving of regular vanilla ice cream and it'll contain about 15 grams of carbohydrate. Or you can have one ½ cup serving of one of the popular healthier brands of vanilla ice cream and it'll contain about 18 carbs. Sure, the calories are lower in the "healthier," lower fat ice

cream, and it might have less sugar, fat, or both. That may be important to you. Or it may not. The fact is, when it comes to how many carbs are in the ice cream (and, of course, how much insulin are you going to need to cover your meal), the real, regular ice cream has fewer.

Moral of this story - It pays to read the label. It may seem goofy to stand in the store reading the "Nutritional Facts" label on everything you buy. But boy, can you learn a lot from those labels!

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