

Does sugar matter for heart health?

When most people think about eating for a healthy heart, they think about the importance of getting plenty of fruits and veggies, watching saturated fat intake, and minimizing sodium. But what about sugar?

According to the [American Heart Association](#), no more than 6% of the calories you eat should come from added sugar. For most American women, that's about 6 teaspoons of sugar; for men, it's about 9 teaspoons. Americans have a long way to go to meet this goal, since the average intake is about 17 teaspoons per day, according to the [Centers for Disease Control](#).

The most important thing to understand about this guideline is that it is about ADDED sugar, which is very different from the sugar found naturally in foods like fruits and vegetables. A medium bell pepper, for example, contains 3 grams of sugar, but this sugar is packaged with a slew of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. It is NOT damaging – so don't cut down on peppers!

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 240mg	6%
* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.	

Added sugars have an unfavorable effect on the body. Those used to sweeten foods and drinks (white sugar, maple syrup, honey, etc.), are easy to spot. Others are more hidden within packaged foods under the guise of many names, including those ending in “-ose” (dextrose, maltose, lactose, sucrose), dextrin, corn syrup, barley malt, treacle, and more. Fortunately, the FDA requires food manufacturers to disclose total AND added sugars on the nutrition facts label, so it's easy to spot foods with added sugars.

Beverages, yogurts, cereals, sweets, and desserts are major sources of added sugar. But remember to look at labels for foods that aren't even sweet, like salad dressings, pasta sauces, peanut butter, and condiments. Choose brands with the lowest amount of added sugars.



How can cutting back on added sugar protect your heart?

Reduced Risk of Obesity. Too much added sugar can contribute to weight gain and obesity, a major risk factor for heart disease, as it is associated with high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and insulin resistance, all of which increase the risk of heart disease.

Reduced Blood Pressure. Excess sugar intake can lead to insulin resistance and elevated levels of insulin in the blood, which may contribute to high blood pressure and increased stroke risk.

Improved Blood Lipid Levels. Diets high in added sugars have been linked to increased triglycerides and decreased HDL (good) cholesterol levels. These lipid abnormalities are associated with an increased risk of atherosclerosis and heart disease.

Decreased Inflammation. Excessive sugar consumption can promote inflammation in the body, which plays a key role in the development of cardiovascular diseases.

Blood Sugar Control. Added sugars can cause rapid spikes and crashes in blood sugar levels, which can strain the pancreas and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, which is a significant risk factor for heart disease.

No Added Sugar Chocolate Truffles



These will satisfy your sweet tooth with not a single gram of added sugar! Loaded with fiber, antioxidants, and healthy fats, these decadent bites are also gluten free and vegan.

Ingredients:

- 6 large Medjool dates
- 1½ cups sweet potato puree (you can use canned, or scoop and mash the flesh of 1 large cooked sweet potato)
- 1 cup almond meal or almond flour
- 3 tablespoons unsweetened cocoa powder
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2/3 cup unsweetened flaked coconut, divided

Instructions:

Remove the pits from the dates and soak in warm water for 20 minutes. Dry off the water and puree in a food processor. Add the sweet potato and vanilla, and pulse a few times to blend.

Transfer mixture into a bowl. Add almond meal, cocoa powder, and ⅓ cup of coconut. Stir until combined.

Roll the mixture into about 24 truffles and then coat them with the remaining coconut. Place truffles into an airtight container and chill in the fridge for an hour.

These will keep for 1 week in the fridge (if they last that long!).

Variation: roll in crushed almonds, pistachios, pecans, or walnuts instead of coconut.