

[IMAGE]

## **The Not-So-Sweet Facts about Sugar**

By Julie T. Chen, MD

Many people seem to crave sugar when they are celebrating or when they are feeling low and sad. What is it about sugar that makes people want to run to it in droves and supports the multi-billion dollar industries that make sugar-loaded products?

Some of my patients think that it is from their childhood experiences that sugar provides a form of comfort and is a comfort food for them. Others think that it's the brief jump in energy they get from eating sugar that makes them want to keep going back for more.

In actuality, all of these thoughts likely play into someone's desire for sugar...but it is also true that once our body gets into the habit of eating a lot of processed sugar and sweets, we crave more and we become "addicted" to sugar.

So, is it so bad to want sugary foods if someone is not overweight or have chronic diseases?

In moderation and rarity, it is something that most people enjoy once in a while. But let's not 'sugar-coat' the reality of sugary foods' impact on our health...it is not beneficial.

sugar - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Glycation of sugar to cells can lead to disruption of normal cellular functioning which may increase wrinkles, skin spots, inflammation of the skin, and acne. Beyond the effects on skin, glycation of excess sugar in the blood stream is disruptive to cellular metabolism and to organ functioning including that of nerves and increases inflammation even at the cellular level of our body.

When my patients talk about sweets, they only focus on things like cakes, candies, and chocolate...but processed sugar as it negatively affects our body comes in the form of excess breads, noodles, rice, and even fruits. Many of my patients to elevated fasting sugar levels in their blood work and/or elevated triglycerides are surprised to find that the source of their abnormal labs are from excess fruit in their diet.

Granted, fruit is much more nutritious than a piece of cake or processed cookies, but just keep in mind that you want to keep everything in moderation...and if you already have problems with processing sugar, it probably isn't a good idea to eat a lot of fruit everyday either. Instead, you should focus on eating more

vegetables to get your phytonutrients, vitamins, and minerals and keep your fruit intake to 1-2 small servings per day.

Don't get me wrong, I am not trying to be the scrooge who takes away all sweet things in your life, but just remember that excess sugar in your blood stream means more inflammation and cellular damage...it would definitely not be the best thing to have in your diet if your goal is for anti-inflammation and healthy aging.

So, the next time you want to reach for something sweet, remember that there are healthier options like >70% dark chocolate and agave nectar in small dosages if you can handle moderation. If you can't control your eating once you start, you may need to abstain from processed sugars altogether. In the long run, your body, health, and skin will all thank you for it!

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