

Sandra R. Kelly  
For Better Living  
Sweet Talk: Moderating Your Sugar Intake

Warm gingersnap cookies, angel food cake drizzled with strawberries, warm honey stirred into your favorite tea. Let's face it, for many of us, the taste of sweet is one of life's great pleasures.

Sugars, in moderation, are part of a healthful diet. Whether naturally occurring or added, sugars can make many nutritious foods even more appealing by adding taste, aroma, texture and color. Aside from their role in tooth decay, sugars have not been directly linked to chronic health problems.

So you may ask, "What's the problem with indulging in something sweet occasionally?" For that, the response is: "For most people, there is no problem." However, many Americans eat large quantities of sugar regularly, rather than occasionally.

Sugar consumption is on the rise. According to diet surveys conducted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the average American consumes 20 teaspoons of added sugar a day. Added sugar does not include sugar naturally found in milk and fruit. This is double the USDA's recommendation that the average person eat no more than 10 teaspoons of added sugar per day.

Twenty teaspoons of added sugar a day may sound like a lot. But consider the following:

- \* A 12 ounce Pepsi contains 10 teaspoons of sugar,
- \* A 2 ounce package of Skittles contains 11 teaspoons of sugar,
- \* An 8 ounce Snapple Pink Lemonade has nearly 7 teaspoons of sugar,
- \* A cup of Kellogg's Frosted Flakes cereal provides more than 4 teaspoons of sugar.

It is surprising how fast it adds up! While there is certainly nothing wrong with having moderate amounts of sugar in your diet, there's a problem when high-sugar, low-nutrient food, such as soft drinks or candies, replaces more nutritious food like milk or fruit.

Try the following tips to help moderate the amount of sugar in your diet.

- \* Buy unsweetened cereals so that you can control the amount of sugar added.
- \* Drink 100 percent fruit juices or water rather than fruit drinks, soda or punches which tend to have considerable amounts of sugar added to them.
- \* Select sugary foods that still have nutritional value. For example, choose oatmeal cookies over sugar cookies; sweeten your cereal with banana slices or raisins instead of table sugar.

\* Choose fresh fruit or fruit not canned in heavy syrup to satisfy your sweet tooth.

\* Go easy on food that have the words sucrose, glucose, maltose, dextrose, fructose or syrup listed among the first three ingredients on the food label. These foods tend to contain high amounts of sugar.

\* Try reducing the amount of sugar in your favorite recipes. You may be surprised that some recipes taste the same even when you reduce the sugar content by as much as 25 to 40 percent.  
Source: Colorado Cooperative Extension

#### Ranch Broccoli Pasta Salad

1 package (16 oz.) tricolor spiral pasta, cooked, rinsed and drained  
3 cups broccoli florets  
1/3 cup finely chopped onion  
1/2 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise  
2 tablespoons fat-free milk  
1 envelope reduced-fat ranch dressing mix  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
6 bacon strips, cooked and crumbled

In a large bowl, combine the pasta, broccoli and onion. In a small bowl, combine mayonnaise, milk, salad dressing mix and salt. Add to pasta mixture. Toss to coat evenly. Cover and refrigerate at least 1 hour. Just before serving, stir in bacon.