

Limited satisfaction found in sugar



By Tabitha Keener

People eat 132 pounds of sugar a year in America per person, accounting for a quarter of total calories consumed. That's a lot considering sugar adds none of the essential nutrients to our diet. In fact, by eating sugar we displace foods we could have eaten that would have been beneficial to our bodies. So why do we eat so much of it?

Beyond the "it tastes good" factor lies many people's rationalization of eating sugar because they think, "I have no energy, I need to stay awake to study."

What happens when we eat that "satisfying Snicker"? The answer depends on how resistant people are to changes in their blood sugar levels.

Some people's bodies can maintain an even balance better, but others may not. If the blood sugar concentration does rise (a state called hypoglycemia), people may feel a rush of energy or a "sugar high."

The body senses an imbalance and pumps out large amounts of insulin to remove sugar from the blood into cells. If the body overreacts and pumps out too much insulin, there will be too little sugar or glucose for proper brain functioning.

The body will then send out a danger signal and secrete adrenaline to start the process of putting some glucose back in the blood. This process can also make a person get shakey, apprehensive, and anxious.

Adrenaline also increases the heart rate. So, great, now you get "stressed out" from sugar and the exam you're trying to stay awake for. The final result is that you feel worse after eating sugar, and so for a quick fix you eat some more sugar, but now to get the same pick up, you have to increase the amount of sugar you eat. The whole process

resembles trying to go from 0 to 60 mph in 3 seconds and screeching to a halt repeatedly in a "Yugo." It's physically and mentally exhausting!

We eat sugar in food and may not even know about it. Think about this: ketchup is 29% sugar compared to ice cream which is 21% sugar; non-dairy creamer is 65% sugar compared to a chocolate bar which is 51% sugar.

Now I know what you're thinking—the Health Center says, "Say no to drugs, say no to unprotected sex," and now "Say no to sugar." This article is not aimed at eliminating all sugar from the planet.

Here are a few suggestions to cut down on sugar intake:

1. Use about 1/3 of the sugar called for in recipes.
2. To make treats with less sugar taste sweeter, add things like cinnamon, cloves or allspice and heat the food or add a tiny bit of salt.
3. Read labels. Look out for companies that break down their sugar lists so sugar won't appear as the first item on the ingredients. Dextrose, sucrose, glucose, and levulose are all refined sugars.
4. Finally, when you have exams, don't depend on sugar to keep going.

Sugar is fine in moderation, especially if it makes you more likely to eat very nutritious foods by making them a bit tastier. However, most people usually do not eat sugar in moderation.



EATING

Continued from page 1

In 1989, Knight and Boland did a study on eating and food "labeling." Subjects answered a questionnaire and their answers determined whether they were to be classified as "restrained" or "unrestrained" eaters.

Subjects were also asked to rate foods on a scale from the least to the most "forbidden." Foods like milkshakes rated high on the scale, whereas celery rated low.

The study revealed that labels such as "forbidden" were a larger influence on "restrained" eaters' food choices than actual caloric value or fat content. The labels had no bearing on what the "unrestrained" eaters chose to eat.

Often a paradox is created because the label given to a food is misleading. For instance, a 12-ounce milkshake and a chef's salad have approximately the same number of calories, depending on how they are made.

Nonetheless, the milkshake is labeled "forbidden" by most "restrained" eaters, but a chef's salad is not considered "forbidden."

There has been a great deal of contradiction created because of our relentless emphasis on thinness.

The foods we begin to "prefer" often do not coincide with our liking or our tastebuds, but rather are determined by our physiological desires and cultural factors.

People eat for a variety of reasons. Some are healthy and some aren't. Snacking is healthy if we pay attention to it and supplement our diet with nutritious snacks. If you are not sure whether you're using eating as a "psychological crutch," think about it.

Do you ever feel out of control when you eat? Do you find yourself always eating when you are in certain moods (e.g., when depressed or stressed)? Recognizing these behaviors is the first step toward curbing a psychological addiction to food.

If you feel that you have a problem with eating, aren't satisfied with your own self-image, or think that you are addicted to food, consider seeing a nutrition counselor.

Contact the Student Health Center's Health Education Program in order to set up an appointment with Jane Katra, our Nutrition Educator, or a Peer Health Advisor in nutrition.

Call the Health Education Room at 346-4456 for more information.

HABITS

Continued from page 1

sugar put back into foods such as ice cream, candy, soft drinks, and Hostess Snacks—can also cause the stress that we, by eating these foods, seek to alleviate. Refined sugar can cause mood swings because of the way it reacts with our body chemistry. Glucose in the bloodstream rises quickly with ingestion of high sugar foods.

Glucose immediately triggers the secretion of insulin, a hormone produced by the pancreas that hastily brings energy and emotions down.

Therefore, the sugar addict alternates between blood sugar-related ups and downs.

Many people also tend to reach for the other extreme — salty foods (i.e. potato chips, salted nuts, and popcorn) — when they're stressed.

High salt consumption, especially in salt-sensitive individuals, increases the

chance of high blood pressure.

The higher the blood pressure, the more reactive blood pressure will be during stressful times.

Thus, there is some evidence that high salt consumption increases the chance of a physical breakdown, such as a stroke or heart attack.

These are a few of the stress-nutrition links.

Yet, the question being begged is: What should/can I eat to combat a stressful day and enable me to be positive and energetic all day long?

There are primarily three things a person should do to ensure good health and maximum stress-resistance.

First, eat a balanced, consistent diet with sufficient, but not excessive, calories, vitamins, and minerals (i.e. zinc).

Second, minimize the following response(s) to stress:

undereating, overeating, excessive intake of alcohol or caffeine (no more than one or two drinks per day), and "sugar hits."

Third, follow these simple principles toward optimal health in your diet:

- Low salt—less than 6 grams per day
- Low fat, especially saturated fat—less than 30 percent of calories through fat, less than 10 percent from saturated fat
- Low cholesterol—less than 300 milligrams per day
- Low refined sugar intake
- High complex carbohydrates—50 percent or more of total calories
- High fiber—20-30 grams per day
- Plenty of water—6-8 glasses per day.

With all of the reasons why we get stressed throughout the day, the one area which most of us have full control over and the most variability is in what we eat.

Instead of contributing to our already stress-filled life by consuming large amounts of sugar or caffeine, we can reduce our stress level by taking the time to eat and by eating nutritionally.

LOOK INTO BOOKS

These books will help you learn how to help yourself eat more sensibly and set up a diet and exercise plan you can enjoy.

JANE BRODY'S GOOD FOOD BOOK by Jane Brody.

By far the best cookbook I have seen as far as getting started on a low fat lifestyle. This is a nutrition almanac, cookbook and how-to guide all in one. Easy, enjoyable reading.

THE NEW LAUREL'S KITCHEN by Robertson, Flinders and Ruppenthal.

This is a vegetarian, low fat, high fiber cookbook. This is still a good reference for meat eaters because it offers insight on how to reduce meat in the diet to reduce fat intake. Excellent guide for learning to cook legumes and different grains.

THE NEW FIT OR FAT by Covert Bailey.

This book will show you how to devise your own fitness program, whether you're an athlete or a beginner. Baily clarifies the relationship between fitness and fatness.

THE FAST-FOOD GUIDE: WHAT'S GOOD, WHAT'S BAD AND HOW TO TELL THE DIFFERENCE by Michael Jacobson.

This book first informs readers about the basic elements of proper nutrition and foods to avoid. Jacobson gives the lowdown on the caloric/nutrient makeup of fast foods in a straightforward, often witty manner. If you MUST eat fast food, you should take a look at this book!