

Toxically sweet

Traditional holiday candy is full of refined sugar and other unhealthful products, which dieticians warn to avoid

Aaron Shakra
Pulse Reporter

The hues of red, white and pink are prolific each Feb. 14, but for Valentine's Day candy, the common colors are FD&C Red 3 and 40, Yellow 5 and 6, and Blue 1.

If love isn't toxic, the candy might have that potential. It's no secret that the most prevalent ingredient in Valentine's Day fare is refined sugar.

The "red hot" tip-top of the food pyramid in the textbook "Human Biology" lists items of which humans should restrict their intake. These include butter, cream, margarine, syrups, table sugar, candies and other sweet desserts.

"It's refined sugar. There are no nutrients. The calories come in the form of sugar," said dietitian Jessie Campbell, who runs Lettuce Eat Nutrition, a home-based business. "After that initial surge of energy, it just drops off."

Naturopathic physician Daniel Hardot says sugar is "the single most addictive substance in our society." He said consuming too much could be costly.

"Refined sugar is an irritant to the nervous system," he said. "You're going to lose mental acuity. You're going to lose mental functioning."

In his book "Sugar Blues," William Dufty covers the sub-

solids, cocoa butter, chocolate liquor, lecithin (an emulsifier), and vanilla. While this is one of the considerably "healthier" candies, refined sugar prevails in the chocolate products.

According to Eric Armstrong's "Partially Hydrogenated Oils" Web site at <http://www.treelight.com/health/Par>

cally changed to improve its thickening properties. It can come from a variety of sources — corn, wheat or potato, for example. Necco Sweethearts, a long-time Valentine's Day staple, might list the starch on the box, but it takes some research to find out the ingredient's actual origins.



Photo illustration Emerald

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habits kill us."**

Daniel Hardot
naturopathic physician

stance's health hazards in detail. He writes: "Refined sugar is lethal when ingested by humans because it provides only that which nutritionists describe as "empty" or "naked" calories. ... In addition, sugar is worse than nothing because it drains and leaches the body of precious vitamins and minerals through the demand its digestion, detoxification and elimination make upon one's entire system."

The ingredients in the Euphoria Chocolate Company's "Chocolate Mingle" are as follows: Whole milk

tiallyHydrogenatedOils.html, "consuming partially hydrogenated oils is like inhaling cigarette smoke. They will kill you — slowly, over time, but as surely as you breathe. And in the meantime, they will make you fat!"

Armstrong's Web site contains in-depth writings pertaining to the health problems associated with hydrogenated oil. The oils are found in more products than just candy. The culprit can be found in common supermarket items as well — potato chips, peanut butter, ice cream and nutrition bars.

A single Russell Stover "Peanut Butter Heart" lists four different forms of hydrogenated oil in its ingredients.

Another standard ingredient in many Valentine's treats, modified food starch, is physically or chemi-

In spite of this potentially dreadful information, if candy consumption is limited, experts say the overall ill effects can be avoided.

"Valentine's Day candy once a year is probably fine," biology professor Vincent Lombardi said. "I don't think a little bit is going to kill you, especially if you brush your teeth."

Hardot agreed.

"Vices don't kill us; habits kill us," he said.

However, Campbell indicated Valentine's Day gorging should indeed be limited to one day a year.

"You don't want to have to eat it all the time," she said. "If someone says, 'I have to have it,' just portion it out. Just watch out for those after (holiday) sales."

Contact the Pulse reporter at aaronshakra@dailyemerald.com.

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