

This Dangerous Sugar Ominously Flies Under the Radar

By now you've heard about the dangers of sugar, particularly added sugars. It's a genuine health crisis.

The average American consumes about 22 teaspoons of sugar a day. That's drastically more than our bodies are equipped to handle. As a result, this excess sugar literally destroys our bodies in nearly every way imaginable. We're just not designed to process that much sugar.

Experts now know that heart disease is caused by inflammation, as are a whole host of other health problems. Inflammation is caused by a diet too high in sugar. Too much sugar leads to obesity, which in turn puts us at high risk for a myriad of other health problems, such as cancer, diabetes and arthritis.

As a result of increased education about the dangers of sugar, more people are trying to steer clear of the stuff. That's good. However, there is a certain type of sugar that is flying under the radar. People are eating it thinking it's healthy, but it's not. Far from it. In fact, it's worse than regular sugar.

It's called fructose.

Fructose is what makes fruit taste sweet. Fructose, which comes from fruit, is different from glucose, which is in table sugar. Our bodies react to fructose and glucose in different ways, and as you'll see, fructose is usually worse.

For starters, our body metabolizes fructose differently than glucose. Fructose goes straight to the liver, where it is promptly converted to stored fat, particularly belly fat,

which, because of its close proximity to vital organs, is an especially dangerous type of fat, as opposed to fat in the hips and thighs.

Unlike glucose, fructose doesn't raise leptin. This is very bad because leptin is a hormone that tells us when we're full. That feeling of fullness, the feeling of satisfaction is called "satiety." It triggers your brain that you've had enough and you don't want more. Fructose does not activate that trigger, so you just want more and more of the stuff. There's no "off" switch! Fructose does not tell your body that it's satiated.

Fructose also can lead to insulin resistance. Like leptin, insulin is a critical hormone (actually all hormones are critical!) that, when working improperly or not at all can cause chaos throughout your entire system. Insulin is necessary to lower the impact of sugar in our blood. Another drawback to fructose is that it goes through a negative process called glycation, much more than glucose. The result is advanced aging.

By now you are probably thinking, "Wait, if fructose, the sweetener from fruit, is so bad, why do all these health experts tell us to eat fruit?"

When people advise eating fruit, they are talking about fresh, whole, fruit or fresh-frozen, whole fruit. That's the only kind of fruit we should be consuming. That's because the negative impact of the fructose in fruit is offset by the wonderful fiber in fresh fruit. Fiber is the "meaty" part of the fruit ... the pulp, if you will, that is so good for us. Fiber slows down the digestion of the ultra-sweet fructose. Fiber is absolutely necessary when consuming fructose, and that fabulous combination is found only in fresh fruit. Also, fresh fruit contains all kinds of wonderful vitamins, phytonutrients, antioxidants and minerals.

Still, even with all the benefits of fresh fruits, most nutrition experts advise limiting the amount of fresh fruit we eat because of the negative impact fructose has on the body. If you are trying to lose weight, stick to no more than a cup of fresh fruit. Remember, you can still get fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients by eating vegetables.

Different fruits have different amounts of fructose. Berries and cherries contain the least amount. Therefore, when you choose to eat fruit, choose those kinds if at all possible. Fresh fruits that are high in fructose are pears, grapes, bananas and apples.

So that's fresh fruit. It's not so terrible. But what truly is terrible is fruit in any form but whole, such as fruit juice and fruit concentrate.

These items have all the negative aspects of fresh fruit, namely fructose, without any of the added benefits of fresh fruit such as the fiber and nutrients. Fruit juice and fruit juice concentrate have been stripped of the fiber and nutrients. And, as the name suggests, not only is fruit juice stripped of everything good, it is also concentrated fructose. So, for example, you could eat one apple and get a fair amount of fructose that is balanced by fiber and nutrients. That's not so bad. On the other hand, you could drink apple juice, which has virtually no fiber and nutrients, but the fructose of several apples. The same thing goes for fruit juice concentrate. It contains the fructose of many apples and none of the benefits.

The bottom line is, if you are eating any fruit product other than fresh, whole fruit, you are getting tons of fructose and very little if any fiber and nutrients.

As you can see, fruit byproducts are very harmful to our health. However they are marketed as healthy foods. Food

manufacturers know that most people do not understand the health hazards associated with fruit juice and concentrated fruit juice. The people who make fruit juices and all the hundreds of fruit products from fruit roll-ups, to gummy fruit to breakfast bars know full-well that if you put the word, "fruit" on a product, people will mistakenly think it's healthy. Don't be fooled!

Don't fall for their other trick: "No Sugar Added." Super-sweet concentrated fructose, such as the kind in fruit juice, does not contain added sugar. But the fructose itself, in its stripped, concentrated form, is worse than sugar!

Check the list of ingredients. If you see any type of fruit syrup, fruit concentrate or fruit juice, put it back. Parents, if you think you are doing your kids a favor by feeding them fruit leathers or fruit snacks (there are a million of them in the grocery store, all marketed like health foods) you might as well just give your kids candy. Their bodies react to them the same way.

The bottom line is this: Stay away from all fruit juices and other fruit byproducts. The food manufacturers try to make us think they're healthy, but the only type of healthy fruit is fresh, whole fruit or fresh-frozen whole fruit. And even then, we should eat that sparingly.

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