

## Types of Sugar

Commonly speaking we think of either white sugar or brown sugar. There are other sugars than the sugar (brown or white) from sugarcane. While made from the same chemical building blocks, the blocks are laid differently for each sugar. Some of the different examples of sugar are lactose, which comes from milk; fructose which comes from fruit and the familiar sucrose which comes from sugar cane or sugar beet. The main difference in these sugars is the way in which they are made. While these sugars have different chemical structures, they, however, taste more or less the same (sweet).

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**SUGAR IN THE DIETS** Sugar gives energy About 40% of all the energy a baby uses comes from sugar &ndash; lactose. Even as adults, human beings tend to like sugar and sweet foods. Sugar gives the the body the energy it needs to perform all its functions like walking, running, breathing etc. It has been established for example that there are certain processes in the brain that would stop without sugar. So, sugar is essential for the normal functioning of the body.

**SUGAR SWEETENERS** Human beings, like all mammals are born with a liking for sweetness. The sweet taste in sugar makes food palatable. Sugar can overcome the bitterness and sourness in foods and medicines so that they are easy to eat or drink.

**SUGAR PREVENTS ROTTING** Foods like wedding cakes, honey and jams can be preserved for a long time without refrigeration because they are either coated with icing sugar (wedding cakes) or have a high sugar concentration (honey and jam). People for centuries have used sugar to keep food from spoiling.

**HOW MUCH ENERGY DOES SUGAR GIVES?** In order to answer this question one has to have a way of measuring energy. To measure energy in foodstuffs we use kilocalories. The more kilocalories one gets in a foodstuff, the more energy the foodstuff gives. Unfortunately, for weight watchers the more kilocalories a foodstuff gives, the more fattening it is. Even for non-weight watchers, being overweight is hard on the heart and therefore must be avoided. One teaspoon of sugar gives 16 kilocalories whereas half a spoon of butter gives 45 kilocalories. Butter therefore, gives out more energy and hence, is more fattening than the same amount of sugar.

**HOW TRUE IS IT THAT A FAT PERSON HAS A HIGH SUGAR INTAKE?** Research has shown that thin people tend to have a high sugar intake than fat people. Thin people may be assumed to have a negative energy balance. Therefore, such individuals with less sugar reserves would tend to burn off most of the sugar as soon as it becomes available to affect the deficit.

**SOME HINTS FOR HEALTHY LIVING**

- Do not gobble your food.
- Do not overeat any food; eat in moderation.
- Do not take too much alcohol.
- Do not eat too many fatty foods.
- Eat a variety of foodstuffs e.g. different vegetables, meat, cereals etc.
- Eat balanced meals with enough fibre for roughage, energy (e.g. sugar) for the proper functions of the body, proteins, vitamins, minerals for building up and protecting the body.
- Exercise regularly.
- Look on the positive side of life! There is something positive even from the worst situation.

\* Compiled by Swaziland Sugar Association in consultation with Dr. B.M. Tiisekwa, University of Swaziland.