

SUGAR SMART

Breakfast

Breakfast can be a surprisingly sugary meal of the day. In particular, we need to watch out for cereals that might seem healthy but can contain quite a lot of sugar.

Here are some breakfast foods that we might want to cut down on:

- High sugar cereal
- Sugar or honey as a topping for cereal or porridge
- White bread
- Toast and bread toppings such as jam and honey

And here are some breakfast foods that we might like to include more of:

- Low-sugar cereal such as wholewheat cereal biscuits or shredded wholegrain pillows or porridge
- Lower fat milk, ideally skimmed, if not, then semi-skimmed (fully skimmed milks are unsuitable for under-5s)
- Chopped fruit as a topping for cereal or porridge
- Wholegrain bread
- Toast and bread toppings such as avocado, mashed banana, soft cheese or eggs

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Lunch

It's important that we pick the right foods for lunch - to give us energy without the sugar!

Here are some lunch foods we might want to cut down on:

●● White bread

●● Chocolate

●● Crisps

●● Sugar-covered popcorn

●● Cake

●● Biscuits

●● High-sugar baked beans

●● High sugar ready-made soup

●● Ketchup

Here are some lunch foods we might want to include more of:

●● Wholegrain or multigrain bread

●● Plain popcorn

●● Fruit

●● Rice cakes

●● No added sugar jelly

●● Plain yoghurt

●● Malt loaf

●● Pasta or lentil salad

●● Homemade soup

●● Salad

Dinner

When it comes to dinners, there are a few key rules to follow:

●● Try to cut down on takeaways, ready meals and eating out. If you aren't cooking at home, watch out for dishes like sweet and sour dishes, chilli dishes and some curry sauces, which are typically high in sugar.

●● Avoid stir-in sauces as these can often be high in sugar.

●● Watch out for some shop-bought salads, which can have salad cream dressings that can be high in sugar.

●● Avoid ketchup.

●● Read your labels!

Desserts

Desserts are often very sugary and could be a place to really reduce our sugar consumption. Rather than list sugary desserts (there are too many to mention!), here are some Sugar Smart top tips:

●● Replace sugary desserts with fresh, frozen or tinned fruit. Make sure tinned fruit is served in juice not syrup.

●● Rice puddings and yoghurts can often come in low-sugar versions.

●● Remember, children should have smaller portions than adults – this goes for desserts too.

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Snack time

Healthier snack options are those without added sugar, such as fruit (fresh, tinned or frozen), unsalted nuts, unsalted rice cakes, oatcakes, or homemade plain popcorn.

When shopping, look out for lower-sugar (and lower-fat) versions of your favourite snacks. Buy smaller packs, or skip the family bags and just go for the normal-sized one instead.

Here are some lower-calorie substitutes for popular snacks:

- cereal bars – despite their healthy image, many cereal bars can be high in sugar and fat. Look out for bars that are lower in sugar, fat and salt.
- biscuits – swap for oatcakes, oat biscuits, or unsalted rice cakes, which also provide fibre.
- cakes – swap for a plain currant bun, fruit scone, or malt loaf. If you add toppings or spreads, use them sparingly or choose lower-fat and lower-sugar varieties.
- Dried fruit, such as raisins, dates and apricots, is high in sugar and can be bad for your dental health because it sticks to your teeth. To prevent tooth decay, dried fruit is best enjoyed at mealtimes – as part of a dessert, for example – rather than as a snack.

Healthier alternatives to sweet snacks:

- Chunks of melon, strawberries, grapes, or whatever you have to hand. Look out for fruit that's in season, it's likely to be cheaper.
- Low fat fruit yoghurt.
- A handful of dry, reduced sugar cereal with a few raisins or sultanas.

Healthier savoury snack ideas:

- Baked crisps
- Small handful of unsalted mixed nuts
- Pumpkin and sunflower seeds
- Pitta and lower fat dips like salsa or reduced fat hummus
- Rice cakes with lower fat cream cheese and cucumber
- Celery sticks filled with lower fat cream cheese
- Homemade popcorn (without sugar or salt)
- Unsalted ricecakes, corncakes or oatcakes

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Drinks

Nearly a quarter of the added sugar in our diets comes from sugary drinks, such as fizzy drinks, sweetened juices, squashes, and cordials. A 500ml bottle of cola contains the equivalent of 17 cubes of sugar!

To be Sugar Smart when it comes to drink try to....

- Swap sugary drinks for water or lower fat milk
- Limit fruit juice to meal times and dilute it with water
- Reduce the number of fizzy drinks
- Cut back on sugar added to tea and coffee

Watch out for the sugar content in flavoured water drinks: a 500ml glass of some brands contains 15g of sugar, the equivalent of nearly four teaspoons of sugar!

Use a glass: Pour a healthier drink into a cup or glass and they may not notice it's different to the more sugary one they're used to.

Limit juices and smoothies: Fruit juices and smoothies are sugary but still count as one of your 5 A DAY. Limit to 150mls a day and have it with a meal because it can cause tooth decay.

Sparkling surprise: Instead of a fizzy drink, try sparkling water poured over ice, served with a wedge of lime or lemon. Add a couple of straws and it should go down refreshingly well!