

Is your child eating or drinking too much sugar?

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Are you concerned about your child or teenager 's eating habits? Are they reluctant to eat a healthy, varied and balanced diet and want to eat too many unhealthy foods, especially with a high sugar content?

Five reasons that help explain to your child why too much sugar is bad for them.

1. Acne

A high sugar diet can increase the risk of developing acne. The reason for this is that sugary foods spike a person's blood sugar levels. This leads to an increase in the production of oils in the skin and in the secretion of androgen, a hormone produced in the body in greater amounts in boys and men. Androgen plays a role in the development of acne. A study of over 2,300 teenagers in Eskisehir in Turkey in 2011 found that those who frequently consumed added sugar had a 30% greater risk of developing acne.

2. Can cause tiredness and lack of energy

It is often thought that foods high in sugar can give us more energy and this is true up to a point. However, sugary foods and drinks cause rises in energy levels which are fleeting. Eating foods which are loaded with sugar but lacking in protein, fibre or fat produces a brief energy boost but this is quickly followed by a drop in the level of blood sugar. In children and teenagers, this can

cause frequent fluctuations in energy levels. Therefore, to maintain consistent energy levels through the entire day, chose carbohydrates for your child to eat which are low in added sugar and are combined with proteins or fats which will keep blood sugar levels and energy levels stable.

3. Drinking too much sugar will cause weight gain

Sugar-sweetened drinks like lemonade, cola and juices are loaded with fructose, a type of simple sugar. When your child drinks large amounts of fructose, this will increase their hunger. The reason for this is that excessive consumption of fructose impacts on the effectiveness of leptin in the body. Leptin is a hormone which regulates hunger and tells the body to stop eating. Therefore, sugary drinks won't curb your child's hunger, it will be increased. This can lead to overall weight gain and an increase in visceral fat which is a type of deep belly fat which has been linked to diabetes and heart disease.

4. Too much sugar can lower your child's mood

When your child's blood sugar level drops after consuming too much sugar, this leads the body to put out certain hormones, including one called cortisol. Cortisol is also known as the "stress hormone." When cortisol levels are too high for too long, this hormone can hurt you more than it helps. Over time, high levels of cortisol in a child's system will negatively impact upon their mood and can lead to mental health difficulties such as high anxiety or depression.

5. Too much sugar will increase your child's chances of long-term significant health conditions

The number one cause of death worldwide is heart disease. One of the main causes of heart disease is obesity caused by an unhealthy diet. However, this is not the only reason why sugar impacts negatively upon the heart. High levels of sugar in a diet can result in high triglyceride, a significant risk factor for heart disease. High sugar intake is also associated with atherosclerosis, when the arteries to the heart become clogged with fatty deposits. Similarly, obesity is considered to be the strongest risk factor for Diabetes. Over time, high-sugar consumption creates resistance in the body to insulin. Insulin is the hormone produced by the pancreas that regulates blood sugar levels. Diabetes is a serious condition. If left untreated, it can seriously damage parts of the body, including the eyes, heart and feet.

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