

# Diet and Wellness



Numerous studies over the last two decades have shown that consuming too much sugar can have significant negative effects on both our physical and mental health. Leading experts in the field suggest that adults consume between 25g and 38g of sugar per day. However, many people throughout Canada and other parts of the world, consume far more than that.

The truth is, sugar is found in nearly 70% of all processed and packaged food. This can make it difficult to avoid sugar, even when we believe we are eating a healthy, balanced diet.

## Sugar and Our Body

Every part of the body is effected by sugar consumption: strain is put on the heart as blood pressure increases; in the liver, sugar consumption can lead to a buildup of fat, increasing chances of liver disease; muscles and joints are more prone to chronic pain due to inflammation; the pancreas releases insulin to process the sugar, too much of which can lead to type 2 diabetes; in the gut, fungal and microbial imbalances can lead to digestive issues.

Without limiting sugar consumption, you are significantly more likely to develop type-2 diabetes,

as well as heart disease and cancer due to inflammation

## Sugar and Our Brain

When we consume sugar, the brain begins to release dopamine and serotonin, also known as the 'feel good' hormones. It is natural to want to engage in behaviours that make us feel good, but too much sugar too often can desensitize these dopamine and serotonin receptors over time. This means that we will need to consume even more sugar to achieve the same good feeling.

The brain begins to have a hard time regulating these changes, resulting in mood swings and difficulty concentrating while it calibrates. Additionally, eating a diet high in sugar limits the brain's production of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF) that allows us to learn new things, as well as maintain memories.



## Eating for Health

Now that we know how eating too much sugar can impact our physical and mental health, it is time to focus on food and behaviours that will help boost our health and well-being.

It is important to know how to recognize sugar on an ingredient list, as there are so many different names various manufacturers use. These many synonyms include, but are not limited to: glucose, maltose, sucrose, lactose, maltodextrin, caramel, molasses, and corn syrup. To ensure you are not eating more sugar than you realize, focus on filling your diet with whole foods, like fruit, vegetables, and leafy greens, while limiting packaged or processed foods. Eating 15-20g of lean protein in the morning helps to stabilize blood sugar, which will give you slow burning energy, as well as curb your appetite later in the day. Eating leafy greens such as spinach and kale, provide your body with vitamins and minerals that depletes when you consume sugar, and reduce inflammation.



Information adapted from Berzin, R. (2022). *State Change: End Anxiety, Beat Burnout, and Ignite a New Baseline of Energy and Flow*. New York: S&S/Simon Element.

The content in this pamphlet is not intended to be a substitute for professional advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your family physician with any questions you may have regarding your condition.