



Sweet, Sweeter, Sweetest

This is the first story in a three-part series on nutrition. Coming articles will focus on nutritional diets for good health and weight loss.

By Betty Magruder

Unlike yesteryear's ideal homemaker, modern wives and mothers also have jobs outside the home. Entering the nation's work force has reduced their time in the kitchen. In the past decade the answer to feeding the family has come with a booming "ready-to-eat" industry—cereals, crackers, cookies, canned goods and precooked, and frozen dinners. And if those types of food take too long to heat—it's just a few miles to the nearest fast food establishment.

"Empty calories" are estimated to be more than half of the calories consumed in the U.S. and are from sources such as white bread, polished rice, spaghetti, macaroni and sugar.



Eat Cake — Add Pounds

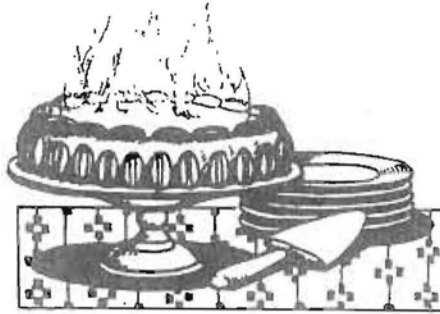
But exposed to nutritional warnings everywhere, an increasing number of women are turning away from the temptations of ready-made meals and prepared snacks. They are entering a "new" awareness of the ill effects of diets high in refined sugar, a non-nutritious carbohydrate.

The nutritional education is reinforced by trips to the dentist or by stepping on the scales. Tooth decay, added weight...these are among the proclaimed evils of sugar.

Explaining why sugar is harmful, Granville Knight, a local nutritionist says refined or processed sugar, when consumed, upsets the body's balance of calcium and phosphorus which tends to take the calcium off the teeth and bones and may lead to arthritis as well as tooth decay.

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Sugar Causes Tooth Decay

The link between cavities and sugar is no longer controversial. Sugar is food for the bacteria normally present in the mouth. Byproducts of the bacterial activity on sugar include a gel-like substance which hastens the buildup of bacterial plaque and a group of acids which are prone to attack the tooth.

Key factors in decay not only depend on the individual's protective quality of saliva and the tooth's vulnerability to decay but to how much sugar gets stuck to the tooth and for how long.

Sugar, constituting 24% of the average number of calories consumed by Americans, certainly contributes to a nation-wide problem—being overweight. And, obesity increases the possibility that disorders such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, and arthritis might develop or become more severe.

Aside from tooth decay and a tendency toward added pounds, the problem with sugar, unlike most other sources of carbohydrates, is that it contains no nutrients. And it is added in some form to most bottled, packaged and canned foods.

According to the March 1978 edition of Consumer Reports, sugar is not only in sweet baked goods, desserts and soft drinks, but is found in almost all fruit drinks, salad dressings, sauces, canned and dehydrated soups, pot pies, frozen TV dinners, bacon and other cured meats, some canned and frozen vegetables, most canned and frozen fruit, fruit yogurt, breakfast cereals, and many baby foods.

Unlike our ancestors who ate more fruits and vegetables, today's consumer delights in "junk foods" that are sweet, sweeter or sweetest. There is, however no dietary requirement for sugar that cannot be satisfied by more nutritious foods, such as the fruits and vegetables.

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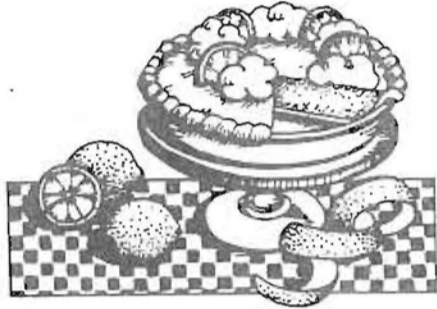
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With a recent trend toward trying to eat foods as Mother Nature intended, and a growing awareness of the detriments of white refined sugar, more people are showing up in "health-food" stores where they ease their consciences, but still want to satisfy their sweet tooth by purchasing the so-called natural or "raw" sugars.

Actually raw sugar is banned in the U.S. It contains such contaminants as insect parts, soil, molds, bacteria, lint and waxes.

But what about the partially refined "turbinado" and brown sugar? Aren't they more nutritious? Dr. Knight answers "No," and reveals that they are merely white sugar with small amounts of molasses added. Quoting Consumer Reports: "Brown and turbinado sugar might look more healthful because of their dark color and distinctive odor. But the few additional nutrients they contain are so miniscule in quantity that for all practical purposes they're worthless."

And as far as nutrition goes, honey is little better, adds the doctor. It has a few nutrients—primarily potassium, calcium and phosphorus—but only in scant amounts.



Can You Kick the Habit?

And the byproducts of added weight and tooth decay are still factors. But, Dr. Knight points out there is a controversy whether honey, with its natural minerals and vitamins intact, may cause less toothdecay than sugar. He is inclined to believe so. Eating sugar in its truly natural state (in the cane) may not cause tooth decay. Dr. Knight cites very few instances of cavities among Hawaiians who chew it. And, as an energy catalyst, long distance runners often chew on the cane as they run.

With all the publicity advocating diets without sugar, many have turned to artificially sweetened food or drink. Now, even that appears to be a poor alternative. Not only have there been reports of allergic reactions in humans and toxicity in animals who consume the sugar substitutes, says the doctor, but these substitutes, like sugar, tend to be addictive, perpetuating the desire for sweets.

Curbing the desire seems to be the biggest problem, but "sugar junkies" can take heart! If you can manage to kick the habit, the doctor says diets free of sugar for at least two months have proven to decrease the craving.