

## NUTRITION NEWS

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### Let's Talk Sugar

It is no secret that a balanced lifestyle and optimal nutrition supports a healthy immune system and helps the body fight off pathogens. Therefore, a diet high in processed foods and sugars has the opposite effect. Overconsumption of sugar is responsible for the increase risk of chronic diseases like diabetes, obesity, and hypertension. The average American consumes almost 152 pounds of added sugar every year! Sugar comes in two forms: the naturally occurring sugar in whole foods (fruits), and added sugars in processed foods (breads, cookies, cakes, soft drinks, fruit juices, condiments, and really anything packaged). Some sugars on ingredient lists you may not even recognize because sugar takes the form in MANY different names. The American Heart Association recommends no more than 6 TEASPOONS (25 grams) per day for women, no more than 9 TEASPOONS (38 grams) for men, and between 3-6 TEASPOONS (12-15 grams) per day for children. While sugar amps up those feel good hormones (hello dopamine and serotonin) and makes you feel good for a little bit, the crash and long term aftermath of metabolic dysfunction is not worth the short term pleasure.

Here is a little insight on just how harmful sugar is on our health and metabolic system. A study found that 100 grams of sugar (amount of sugar in two 16-ounce sodas) notably decreased neutrophils (white blood cells) ability to destroy harmful bacteria. Your immune system is composed of white blood cells and they destroy viruses and bacteria through a process called phagocytosis. This process is weakened, along with the immune system, when high levels of sugar is introduced to your blood, making you more prone to illness and disease.



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# 6 Ways Sugar Can Suppress Your Immune System

## 1) High Sugar Foods Lack Nutrients (They are empty calories):

High sugar diets can also deplete nutrients from other foods as well as what's stored in the body. Micronutrients act as the vehicle that allows for food to be converted into energy. Sugar competes with immune supporting vitamins, so when you are overconsuming sugar that has little to no nutritional substance, you are overfeeding and under nourishing, leading to a deficit in essential vitamins and minerals and inevitably suppressing the immune system.

## 2) Excess Sugar Has Been Associated with Inflammation:

There are no benefits to chronic inflammation, as this is the leading cause of chronic diseases. Too much sugar can lead to chronic inflammation and inflammation in the body affects how your body responds to and fights infection. When white blood cells are triggered, due to consistent inflammation, they can potentially attack healthy tissue and organs, which can lead to chronic and autoimmune diseases (rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, heart disease, cancers, Alzheimer's, etc.)

## 3) Excess Sugar Can Increase Risk of Insulin Resistance:

Insulin is important in how it manages your cells to utilize sugar. It helps move glucose to your cells to stabilize blood sugar and be used for energy. When you eat large amounts of sugar, your blood sugar increases. This makes insulin levels remain high and over time your cells become overwhelmed, therefore, not responding to the signals of insulin the way it should. This is known as insulin resistance, which can then lead to type 2 diabetes.

## 4) Excess Sugar is Associated with Poor Gut Health:

About 70-80% of your immune system is housed in your gut microbiome. The healthy/beneficial bacteria (microbiota) in your gut is responsible for the integrity of your gut to help manage inflammation. When the environment in your gut becomes unbalanced, this leads to something called dysbiosis. Sugar disrupts the gut balance and suppresses the anti-inflammatory microbiota that can lead to damage of the gut wall and compromise the tight junctions you have in your gut. When this happens, it makes it easy for foreign invaders to slip through these junctions and wreak havoc on the whole body and immune system.

## 5) Excess Sugar Can Be Addictive:

Ever sat down with a box of cookies and told yourself that you will only eat a couple, only to realize that you lost count at cookie number 6? Sugar and highly processed foods are extremely addicting. So much so that studies and research have shown that sugar has the same effects on the brain and releases the same (if not more) "reward" and "feel good" hormones that drugs, like cocaine, do. The more sugar you consume, the less sensitive your body and brain becomes to the effects of dopamine, meaning you will need to consume more and more sugar in order to gain the same satisfaction and contentment as before.

## 6) Excess Sugar May Increase Your Body's Stress Response:

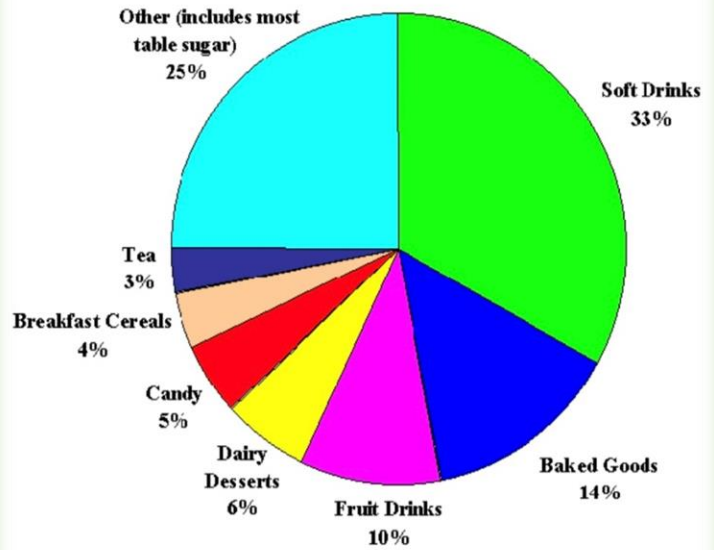
When you experience a stressful situation, your adrenal glands release hormones like cortisol to help manage what's going on. Cortisol should not remain elevated. It should do its job and then chill out. Too much sugar can keep cortisol elevated, which is associated with increase inflammation. Physiological stress can be brought on by overconsumption of sugar, which in turn, can negatively impact your liver and other organs.

**Added sugar is hiding in about 75% of packaged foods! Read the ingredient lists! Anything that ends in -ose is a sugar.**

**Here are some names for "SUGAR:"**

- Glucose
- Honey
- Sorghum syrup
- Lactose
- Fruit juice Concentrate
- High-fructose corn syrup
- Fructose
- Sorbitol
- Molasses
- Maltose
- Corn sweetener
- Sucrose
- Brown sugar
- Syrup
- Dextrose
- Corn Syrup

## Where Added Sugar Comes From



## Spinach Sage Breakfast Patties



**Serves 3-4**

### Ingredients:

2 cups loosely packed fresh baby spinach  
 ½ pound ground beef  
 ½ pound ground pork  
 ¾ teaspoon sea salt

1 tablespoon minced fresh rosemary  
 1 teaspoon ground sage  
 1 teaspoon dried thyme  
 ¼ cup coarsely chopped fresh parsley  
 2 tablespoons avocado oil, divided

### Instructions:

- 1) Place the spinach in a food processor fitted with the S blade. Pulse until the spinach is chopped into small, coarse pieces.
- 2) In a bowl, combine the spinach, beef, pork, salt, rosemary, sage, thyme, and parsley. Use your hands to blend the ground meats with the spinach and spices. Form the mixture into 8 small patties.
- 3) Heat a cast-iron skillet set over medium-high heat and add 1 tablespoon of the avocado oil. Cook the patties in two batches, using the second tablespoon of avocado oil for the second batch. Cook each patty for 3 to 4 minutes on each side, then remove them from the heat, cover them, and allow them to rest 5 minutes before serving.

Recipe Credit: Dr. Brighten

*"Thinking positively isn't about expecting the best to happen every time, but accepting that whatever happens is the best for this moment."*