

m e m o

DATE: August 31, 2016
TO: WIC Staff
FROM: Valerie Haack, WIC Training Coordinator
SUBJECT: Added Sugar — Topic of the Month

Added Sugar in Children's Diets

Sugar is back in the news. The new 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans (DGA) recommend that added sugars in a child's diet be limited to 10% of their total calorie intake (1). Added sugars are sugars and syrups put in foods during preparation or processing, or added at the table. It does not include naturally occurring sugars such as fructose found in fruit or lactose found in milk.

How much sugar is 10% of calories? How do you put this recommendation into practice when kids eat different amounts every day? The American Heart Association (AHA) recently released a recommendation for added sugar that aligns with the DGA recommendation but which is easier to apply. AHA recommends:

- **For children 2-18 years of age:** *less than 25 grams* of added sugar per day. This is equivalent to approximately 6 teaspoons of sugar.
- **For children < 2 years of age:** *no added sugar.*
- **For all children:** limit sugar sweetened beverages to **one 8 oz. serving per week** (2).

These AHA recommendations are based on a careful scientific review of current research in which the review committee concluded that there is a **strong association** between added sugars and increased cardiovascular disease risk for children. This association was found at sugar levels much lower than the average sugar consumption of most children. Although the AHA review was focused on cardiovascular risk factors, the conclusion and recommendation for limiting added sugar was **the same as the 2015 DGA**.

Limiting added sugar in a child's diet is something that WIC counselors and nutritionists have been recommending for years. Helping parents identify foods high in added sugar and helping them set achievable goals towards limiting these foods can have a positive impact on a child's overall nutritional health.

Sweetened beverages account for the greatest source of added sugars in a typical diet.

Cookies, candies and other sweets also contain large quantities of added sugar and contribute to a diet high in added sugar. *Healthy sounding* foods -- like granola bars, bran muffins, fruit snacks or fruit drinks -- contain very high amounts of added sugars (1).

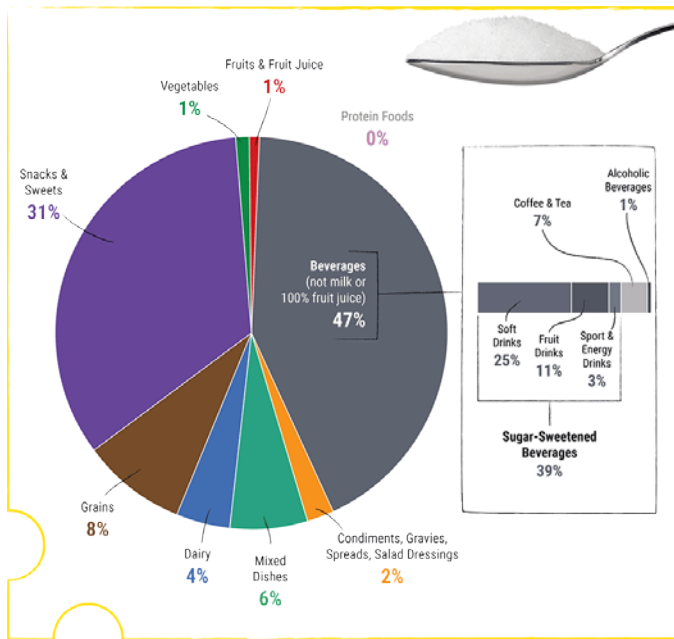


Figure 1. Sources of added sugar in the diet (1)

Encourage parents to look for sugar, and the various names for sugar in the ingredient list on the food label. Refer to *page 2* of the WIC Shopping Guide for a list of terms for sugar and other helpful hints on reading food labels.

Changes in the *Nutrition Facts* label will make it easier for parents to distinguish between *naturally occurring* sugar (such as lactose in dairy products) and *sugars added* to products. The new food labels will distinguish *added sugars* from *naturally occurring* sugars. Added sugars will be listed as grams per serving. The new label is not required on food products until July 2018.



Figure 2. New Nutrition Facts Label (3)

Putting Information into Practice at WIC

Below is an example of how this information might be shared with a mom during a WIC appointment. This is an example of a typical mom with a 3 year old child. No specific nutrition concerns were identified during the assessment and mom doesn't have any questions or concerns.

- **CPA:** after the nutrition assessment: "What questions or concerns do you have about your child's eating?"
- **Mom:** "I don't have any questions or concerns".
- **CPA:** "If there was one thing you'd like to change in your child's diet, what would it be?"
- **Mom:** "Everything is fine".

Where do you go from here? Is the appointment complete? Is there any way to pique her interest in a nutrition topic while keeping the appointment participant centered? You might say

- **CPA:** "We just learned about some new recommendations about added sugar in young kids' diet. I know this is a concern for other moms. Would you like to hear a little bit more about this new information and what is recommended?"
- If mom says "**Sure**", then you can **EXPLORE**
- **CPA:** "Let's start with foods that Bobby eats. What foods does he eat regularly that you know probably have a lot of sugar added to them?" If mom is unsure of what foods are high in sugar, you might show her a graph of where sugar is found in a typical diet or a list of high sugar foods to engage mom in the conversation. (see figure 2)

Depending on mom's response, reaction, change talk, knowledge or concern about sugar in her child's diet, you might then **OFFER**

Offer: Additional information on things like sugar recommendations, limiting sweetened beverages, amount of sugar in various foods, how to read the food label, naturally sweet snacks choices like fruit, etc. based on and tailored to the conversation. Limit information to facts, not judgements. Share only 1 or 2 things.

Explore: Ask questions like "What are your thoughts on what I just shared" or "What surprises you about this information" or "Knowing what you know about what your child likes to eat and these new recommendations, what might you do with this information"

Summarize the conversation, reflecting any change talk you heard.

References:

1. [2015 Dietary Guidelines](#)
2. [American Heart Association Scientific Statement on Added Sugar](#)
3. [FDA Highlights of the New Nutrition Facts Label](#)