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Work to reduce sugar intake to improve your health

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As spring approaches, many of us begin thinking about our summer wardrobe and vacation attire. With preparing for warmer weather, some of us may be worried about how our bodies may have changed with a more sedentary lifestyle during the COVID pandemic.

Losing weight can be difficult, however a good place to start is reducing your intake of sugar, especially added sugar, to lower your overall calorie intake. Sugar can be enjoyed in moderation to satisfy your sweet tooth, but mindful eating habits should be practiced to prevent over-indulgence.

When reducing sugar in your diet, be aware of “added sugars” in your foods that might fly under the radar. Reading the food label will help to identify total sugar and added sugar content.

Often, the label “added sugars” refers to syrups and other sweeteners that are added when foods or drinks are processed.

Some of the more common added sugars are: Corn syrup Dextrose Lactose Maltose

Cane juice/syrup Honey

Agave

Fruit juice concentrates and nectars

These sweeteners might taste good, but like regular sugar you might stir into your beverage, they can raise your blood sugar and contribute to weight gain. Excess sugar and caloric intake can play a role in the development of Type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

For long-term success in curbing sugar intake, start by removing obvious sources of sugar such as pancake syrup and table sugar. Then focus on the amount of sugar you add to baked goods, cereal and your other favorite foods. Baking with little or no sugar is also a possibility. You can puree fruit as a sweetener in cakes and other baked goods. You can also use fresh fruit to accompany a cake instead of icing.

Being aware of sugar content isn't only important for foods. Beverages are often a common source of excess sugar content, especially beverages such as soft drinks, sports drinks, milkshakes and sweet tea.

Juice is another source of high-sugar content.

Enjoy juice in moderation, choosing 100% fruit juice without added sugar. Overall, search for beverages with little to no added sugar like sparkling water or unsweetened tea.

Focusing on drinking more water is a simple way to decrease overall sugar intake. It is calorie and sugar free, and many of us do not meet our daily water requirements to stay adequately hydrated. Forgoing soda for the water bottle is a great start to getting healthy.

In summary, Excess intake of sugar can contribute to excess caloric intake and overall weight gain. Focusing on reducing sugar in the diet can improve your overall health and can contribute to the prevention of chronic disease.

Stay Healthy!