

Sugar vs fat: which is worse for your health?

Woman (UK) · 19 Jul 2021 · 25

This issue has been hotly debated for decades, so I thought it was about time I waded in to investigate. By health, I mean obesity risks, as well as the threat of diseases, such as cardiovascular syndrome, cancers, diabetes etc. By sugar, I mean sugar in its broken-down form – so it could have started life as wholegrain oats or as a chocolate digestive. But, by the time it reaches our blood stream, it has been changed into glucose.



Glucose is transported to our cells (by insulin) to use for energy, not just moving around, but for the body's processes to function. But if we eat a lot of sugar and we're not very active that surplus glucose goes into fat cells. The more sugar we eat, the more insulin we produce, and the louder the pre-diabetic bell rings. On top of that, there's also a greater risk of heart disease, high blood pressure and inflammatory conditions. It's not looking too good for sugar!

And then there's fat. We need a little healthy fat in our diet to fight inflammation, make hormones, absorb fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K), so that means olive oil, nuts, avocados, oily fish and seeds. Too much saturated fat (red meat, butter, cheese) is linked with high-risk levels of bad cholesterol – but trans-fats may be even worse. Made by an industrial process they add shelf-life to processed foods – not terribly natural.

So, how to be healthy and still eat both? That's the conundrum. Sugary foods make you want more sugary foods, so focus on all-you-can-eat veg (they're also carbs) and limit starchy carbs (oats, rice, potatoes) to just once a day. For your fat quota, nibble on nuts, drizzle olive oil and sprinkle those seeds. Taking positive steps to cut down on sugar will reap huge rewards!

* Annie is a fitness coach and creator of the nutrition and fat-loss programme The 21 Day Blast Plan (theblastplan.com), aimed at motivating women towards health and confidence. Annie's plan starts again on 18 September. Visit theblastplan.com to find out more.