



Part 2 of 2

5. How much sugar is safe for my child to have?

Free sugars are the sugars added to foods during processing and preparation, plus the naturally occurring sugars in honey, syrups and fruit juices.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation recommends that adults and children consume no more than 10% of their total energy (calories) as free sugars. For students in grades 3-7 that means approximately no more than 10 tsp (50 mL) per day. This is a guideline only. The number would change slightly based on the student's age, gender and activity level.

10 tsp sugar = 10 sugar cubes = 10 sugar packs = 40 g of sugar

Note that this includes the added sugar in food AND drinks! So, if a child has one 355 mL can of pop, which contains 10 - 12 teaspoons of sugar, he/she has reached the maximum amount of free sugar for one day.

6. Is it okay for my child to have 'diet' pop instead of sugary drinks?

Drinks sweetened with artificial sweeteners (e.g., stevia, aspartame, sucralose, saccharin) are not healthy alternatives to sugary drinks for school aged children and should be avoided.

'Diet' drinks contain none of the nutrients that a child's growing body needs to be healthy and strong. Just like sugary drinks, drinking artificially sweetened drinks gets children used to sweet-tasting, non-nutritious items. The high level of acidity in these drinks can lead to tooth erosion and decay. All they do is bump healthy food and drinks out of your child's diet!

7. What's the difference between 100% fruit juice and a fruity drink?

- Unlike fruity drinks, 100% fruit juice has only fruit juice and some of the natural vitamin C found in fruit. Unsweetened 100% fruit juice is the best choice.
- Limit juice to ½ cup (125 mL) per day. A small tetra-pak of juice is 200 mL. Juice still has natural sugars, which have the same effect on teeth and overall health as other sugary drinks. Eating a whole piece of fruit is more filling, with the same great taste and some fiber too.
- Fruity drinks labelled 'punches', 'splash', 'beverage', or 'cocktails' are made with water, added sugar, flavouring and often only a small amount of fruit juice. Don't be fooled by the colourful fruit pictures on the container. Fruity drinks are not an alternative to eating fruit or drinking 100% juice!

8. How can I know if sugar is added to my children's drinks?

Added sugar is a major ingredient in many popular drinks. Nutrition labels can help us make healthy drink choices. To know if sugar has been added read the ingredient list.

These words on the ingredient list mean sugar has been added: sugar, brown sugar, cane sugar, beet sugar, sugar/glucose-fructose, dextrose, fructose, high fructose corn syrup, glucose, maltose, sucrose, fruit juice concentrates, honey, molasses, maltodextrin, agave syrup, malt syrup, maple syrup, syrup. Choose drinks that contain no added sugar.

9. Are energy drinks safe for children?

Energy drinks are NOT healthy or safe for children. Energy drinks typically have water, caffeine, taurine (an amino acid), vitamins, herbal ingredients and sugar or artificial sweeteners. Children can get too much caffeine very easily by drinking energy drinks. Too much caffeine can disturb their sleep and can make them anxious or jittery. Just 1 cup (250 mL) of an energy drink has almost the same amount of caffeine as 3 cans of cola.

Most energy drinks are high in sugar – 10 tsp in a 355 mL can. To 'energize' children naturally offer healthy foods, and water to quench thirst. Encourage regular physical activity and a good night's sleep.

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