



Today, **we eat more refined sugar than decades ago**, because sugar is almost everywhere. In the 18's, the average American consumed 45 g of sugar every five days. Today, the average American consumes 765 g of sugar every five days which is 17 times more than in the 18's. This increase in sugar consumption has **resulted in an increase in obesity rate, and other health issues** such as dental corrosion, cancer, and diabetes.

What is ironic is that **our bodies need sugar** in order to function well. Our body converts sugar and carbohydrates into glucose that supplies energy.

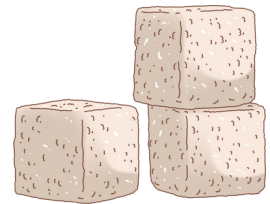
So we can ask, **what is the issue then if sugar is needed but can cause health issues?**

In addition to the amount of sugar we eat, there is the issue of the type of sugar that we eat.

Let's look at the **different types of sugars**:

Natural sugars (not harmful when consumed in moderation)

- Glucose: "simple" sugar which is found in all foods that contain carbohydrates. It is in all living molecules and is vital to life. Furthermore, it is produced by our body and easily broken down by every cell in our body.
- Fructose: it is also a "simple" sugar and its main source is fruits.



Processed sugars to avoid

- Sucrose: it combines glucose and fructose and becomes a complex sugar. This is what makes table sugar.
- High-fructose corn syrup: it is synthesized from corn. Many food manufacturers use it because it is cheap and easy to use.

WHAT SWEETENER IS BEST TO CONSUME?

Some processed sugars are a good substitute for white sugar for cooking but should be consumed in great moderation:

- Agave syrup
- Molasses
- Coconut sugar: has a lower glycemic index (which means it raises blood sugar slower). Coconut sugar may also contain nutrients.
- Stevia (100% pure)



So the verdict is that foods such as **fruits and vegetables that have natural sugar are the best option** and they also provide essential nutrients that help us to be healthy and to prevent diseases.

We can enjoy these foods in good quantity but like all good things, we should not overeat them because too much natural sugar can also affect our blood sugar levels and result in health issues. (Learn more about Temperance from page 63).

It is best to **avoid most processed sugars** such as white table sugar or high fructose corn syrup, which are so bad for our health. And when it comes to **other forms of processed sugar, they are a better alternative** to white table sugar and high fructose corn syrup while cooking but should be eaten with great moderation and sometimes might even need to be avoided by people who have some illnesses. Always consult your doctor to get his approval.

What about no-calorie sweeteners such as stevia or artificial sweeteners? There is not enough information to say that these kinds of sweeteners negatively affect health like processed sugars. Nevertheless, there are studies that have shown that artificial sweeteners may increase weight gain over time. Possibly because they nurture the craving for sweets and also because they might have a negative effect on gut bacteria.

As for stevia, the plant itself is a great sweetener that has been used for ages and it even has some health benefits. But what about processed stevia? Let's talk a little about history. In 1991 the FDA disapproved the stevia because of the pressure from some makers of artificial sweeteners. In 2008 it was finally approved by the FDA but only for the use of rebaudioside compounds that were derived from the stevia plant by Coca-Cola and PepsiCo. Stevia became legal when a major food company got involved but only after it had been strongly processed using a patentable chemical-laden process. Some stevia brands use chemicals like methanol, acetone, ethanol, and isopropanol to process the stevia, which for most of them are known to cause cancer.

But there are ways to enjoy stevia in its best form. **Make sure to look for stevia extract that is 100% pure without added ingredients.** Or you can buy pure dry leaves of stevia or even the plant itself that you can place outside or inside your home.

Here is the last tip on the sugar topic. **Dates are another very good way to add sweetness to your recipes.** They are a natural sweetener that can be eaten as is or pureed and then added to your favorite recipes. They also contain a good amount of potassium, magnesium, copper, manganese, iron, and vitamin B6, are high in fiber, in disease-fighting antioxidants, and have many health benefits.

