

Beware of sneaky sugars

Hidden sugars can have a not-so-sweet impact on health

BY ALISON STANTON

In the 1970s, high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) began appearing in the food supply and has been on the rise ever since, said Maureen Zimmerman, EdD, R.D., program director for sustainable food systems and nutrition faculty in the department of exercise science at Mesa Community College.

“Instead of olive oil and balsamic vinegar on my salads, I use olive oil and lemon, because balsamic vinegar tends to be high in sugar.”

— Eddie Matney

Although Zimmerman said much of the research on how HFCS impacts our health is recent, she said it is well-known that too much sugar consumption of any kind can contribute to obesity. Excess sugars including HFCS, without proper dental hygiene, can also result in dental caries, she added.

Sugar likes to hide...

Avoiding sugar is often easier said than done because so many foods contain hidden sugars in the form of regular sugar as well as HFCS. Zimmerman said that sugar often sneaks its way into foods such as cereals, salad dressings, ketchup, some baby foods and many other consumables.

Eddie Matney, owner and chef at Eddie's House in Scottsdale, said some breads also

contain hidden sugars, as can the flavored butters that people like to spread on top of them.

You need to seek it out...

Matney, who recently lost 40 pounds through a combination of healthy eating and exercise, said that people who are looking to cut back on hidden sugars in foods should not eat anything that is canned.

“For example, canned peas may say ‘no added salt’ but they never say ‘no sugar’ because they usually add sugar to them. Even canned beets will contain added sugar,” he said.

Zimmerman said that consumers can avoid sugars, including HFCS, by carefully reading labels, noting that other names for HFCS are glucose-fructose and corn syrup.

Definitions of sugars

HIGH-FRUCTOSE CORN SYRUP, which comes from corn, is roughly 55 percent fructose and 40 percent glucose, plus other minor sugars and other ingredients.

TABLE SUGAR, called sucrose, is made from sugar cane or beets and is 50 percent glucose and 50 percent fructose.

Source: *Harvard School of Public Health; hsph.harvard.edu/news*