

Sugar and your health

Sugar in our diet

Carbohydrate foods are foods that are broken down into sugar to give us energy. Many foods and drinks contain carbohydrates but some of these are better for your health than others. The types of sugar in your food includes:

Natural Sugars

Natural sugar is found in fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products, and legumes. These sugars have less impact on your health than added sugars. These sugars are often more slowly digested and have a better impact on your health, and if you have diabetes – are great for helping control blood sugars.

Added Sugars

Processed foods like cakes, biscuits, and lollies have high levels of added sugars. Soft drinks, cordial, energy drinks, and fruit juices may also contain added sugar. Added sugar can also hide in processed foods such as sauces, condiments and other flavourings. These processed foods are less healthy for you because they have less nutrients than naturally sweetened foods like fruits.

Compared to foods with added sugar, natural sugars are often healthier because they have more nutrients and minerals.

Problems with too much sugar

Large amounts of sugar, especially in sweetened drinks and snacks, can increase the risk of weight gain and type 2 diabetes. If you already have diabetes, controlling sugar is essential for protecting your kidneys.

Too much added sugar can put you at risk for poorer health.



Tooth decay



Weight gain



Diabetes



**Did you know that
one 355mL can of
cola can contain
39 grams of sugar?**

Sugar, your kidneys, and diabetes

Diabetes is a condition where the level of sugars in your blood is too high. After you eat, your body makes a hormone called insulin. Insulin helps move sugar from your food into your cells, where it's used for energy. When you have diabetes, your body does not use its insulin properly or does not make enough insulin and the sugars stay in your blood. This raises blood sugar levels.

Blood sugar levels that are continually too high can damage the blood vessels in your body. This includes the blood vessels to your kidneys. To protect your kidneys and your health, keep your blood sugar levels within the recommended range. This can be helped by limiting added sugars and eating regular portions of healthy carbohydrate-rich foods distributed throughout the day.

Your doctor may ask you to check your blood sugar levels with a finger-prick blood test. Checking your blood glucose levels can help you keep an eye on your diabetes control and monitor how many carbohydrates you can eat.

Diabetes is usually treated with medications and a healthy lifestyle that includes regular exercise. Make sure to limit added sugars in your diet and follow these general tips for managing diabetes:

- Check your blood glucose levels regularly, if advised by your doctor.
- Eat regular meals and spread them evenly through the day.
- Eat the recommended portion size of carbohydrates and protein rich foods.
- Enjoy eating the right amount of fruits and vegetables each day.
- **Drink water!**

Need more help?

An Accredited Practicing Dietitian (APD) can help you change your diet to fit your lifestyle. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about ways to improve your diet.



How can I eat less added sugar?

Read the food label of all packaged foods. All packaged foods sold in Australia need to have:

1 A Nutrition Information Panel (NIP).

You can use these to help you make better food choices for your kidney disease. Look for sugar on nutrition information panel and compare it with similar products. Choose products with as little added sugar as possible.

Foods containing less than **15g of sugar per 100g.**



NUTRITION INFORMATION		
Servings per package: 3		
Servings size: 150g		
	Quantity per Serving	Quantity per 100g
Energy	608 kJ	405 kJ
Protein	4.2 g	2.8 g
Fat, Total	7.4 g	4.9 g
- saturated	4.5 g	3.0 g
Carbohydrate, total	18.6 g	12.4 g
- sugars	18.6 g	12.4 g
Sodium	90 mg	60 mg
Calcium	300 mg (38%)	200 mg

* Percentage of recommended dietary intake

Ingredients: Whole milk, concentrated skim milk, sugar, strawberries (9%), gelatine, culture, thickener (1442)

✓
This food has 12.4 grams of sugar per 100 grams, making it a **good choice.**

2 An ingredients list.

Read the ingredients list to find added sugar. Other names for sugar include:

- Raw, brown or cane sugar
- Dextrose
- Disaccharides
- Glucose, fructose, lactose and sucrose
- Sorbitol
- Agave nectar
- Corn syrup
- Malt extract
- Molasses
- Rice malt syrup.

Tips for reducing sugar:

Follow these easy tips to reduce sugar in your diet:

- **Drink water instead!** Avoid sugar-sweetened drinks like soft drinks and cordial, fruit juices, and energy drinks.
- Eat fresh foods like vegetables, legumes, wholegrains (brown rice & wheat bread), and fruits.
- Read the labels and avoid added sugar.
- Don't add sugar to your cereals, porridge, coffee, or tea.
- If you eat a lot of sugar, start to cut down slowly. Your tastebuds will adjust over time.

**Remember -
The less added
sugar, the better!**



Things to remember:

- ✓ Sugar is a **carbohydrate needed for energy**, but too much sugar is not good for your health.
- ✓ Natural sugars found in fruits and milk are **better for your health than added sugars** found in soft drinks and processed foods.
- ✓ Read the label to **choose foods low in sugar**. Foods with less than 15 grams of sugar per 100 grams are a good choice.

What does that word mean?

Accredited Practising Dietitian (ADP) – A person who is professionally qualified to give practical diet and nutrition advice.

Blood pressure – The pressure of the blood in the arteries as it is pumped around the body by the heart.

Carbohydrate – A macronutrient. Carbohydrates are the body's main energy source and come from mostly grain foods, fruit, vegetables, and dairy products. Sugar is also a type of carbohydrate but should be limited from the diet.

Diabetes – A chronic disease caused by problems with the production and/or action of insulin in the body which helps control blood sugar levels.

Glucose – A type of sugar which is a major source of energy for most cells of the body.

Kidneys – Most people have two kidneys, each about the size of an adult fist and weighing 150 grams. Inside each kidney there are about one million tiny units called nephrons. The nephrons are the part of the kidney that filters the blood. Each nephron is made up of a very small filter called a glomerulus. *(continued)*

As blood passes through the nephron, water and waste products are removed. Most of the water returns to the blood and the waste products collect in the bladder then leave the body as urine (wee). Most kidney diseases attack the nephrons.

Protein – Substance obtained from food, which builds, repairs, and maintains body tissues. It also helps to fight infections and heal wounds.

Sodium – An essential nutrient that regulates blood volume, blood pressure and water in the body. Also called salt.

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 **Kidney Health**
Australia

Free Kidney Helpline 1800 454 363
kidney.org.au

If you have a hearing or speech impairment, contact the National Relay Service on 1800 555 677 or relayservice.com.au. Have them connect you to the Free Kidney Helpline - 1800 454 363 



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LEARN MORE?**

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by scanning the QR code**

This is intended as a general introduction to this topic and is not meant to substitute for your doctor's or health professional's advice. All care is taken to ensure that the information is relevant to the reader and applicable to each state in Australia. It should be noted that Kidney Health Australia recognises that each person's experience is individual and that variations do occur in treatment and management due to personal circumstances, the health professional and the state one lives in. Should you require further information always consult your doctor or health professional.

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