



# NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOUSTON--(December 1, 1992)--At Christmas, visions of sugarplums may dance in children's heads but sugar in their diets should be kept to a moderate level, according to a nutritionist at the USDA'S Children's Nutrition Research Center in Houston.

"There is a place for sugar in children's diets. They need sugar, vitamins, and minerals for energy. But parents should watch for 'hidden sugars' in foods," said Janice Stuff, a research instructor at Baylor College of Medicine. "Moderation is the key."

Children who learn to prefer "sweet-tasting" foods may face problems down the line, she said.

A high-calorie diet can lead to weight gain in some youngsters. Although most children burn the extra calories received from sugar through daily activity, some do not and may eventually end up overweight, said Stuff.

Dental problems such as tooth decay and unhealthy gums can also be reduced by limiting the amount of sugar in their diet.

She warns that food manufacturers often add sugar to their snack products, especially foods for the microwave, said Stuff.

Parents can promote healthier snacks and decrease sugar intake by making snacks at home. Stuff offers the following suggestions to reduce sugar:

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- \* Drink unsweetened fruit juices and avoid soft drinks containing sugar. Stuff recommends reading juice labels. Often labels misrepresent "punch", "fruit drinks", and "10% juice" products that have a high sugar content.
- \* When preparing juice from concentrate, dilute the juice with additional water to cut the sweetness.
- \* Use fresh fruit purees with chopped fruit to add natural sweetness to baked goods or low-fat plain yogurt.
- \* Make your own frozen fruit bars by freezing ripe fruit juice (orange juice is especially good).
- \* Flavor pancakes, waffles, muffins, and hot cereals with spices such as cinnamon, cardamon, or nutmeg, or with extracts -- vanilla, almond, orange, or maple.
- \* Use 2/3 to 3/4 of the sugar called for in recipes.
- \* Replace cocoa with carob powder in baked goods. This will decrease sugar by 25%.
- \* Pack lunches with individual servings of unsweetened applesauce or fruit in water-packed or light syrup.
- \* Devise a plan with your child to limit candy or a candy-bars once or twice a week. Stick to the rule, hopefully eaten only at home, so your child can follow by brushing their teeth.

"These guidelines can be used in the battle against high-calorie diets," she said. "Promoting a healthy diet is one of the greatest gifts you can give your child during the holidays and throughout the new year."

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