

# A "Weighty" Issue of American Health - Part 3

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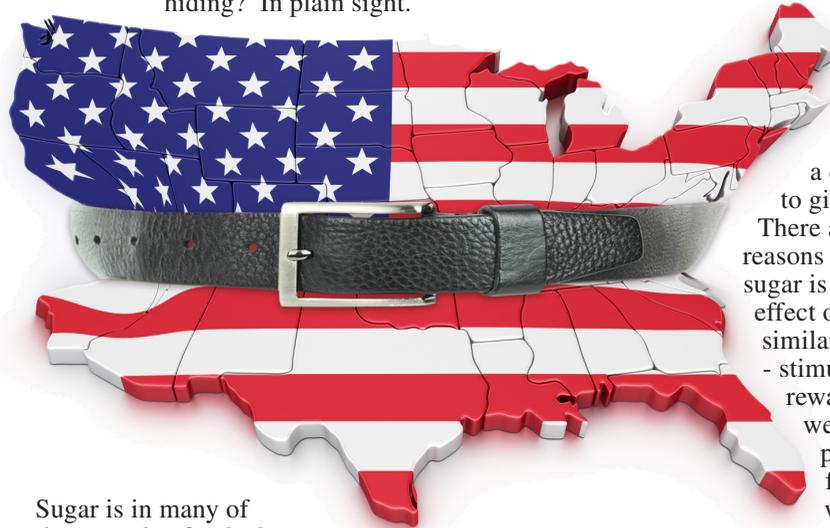
My patients laugh when I tell them "sugar is evil," but I'm only being a little facetious. Diet change is an important tool I use to help my patients optimize their health. Most of my patients don't realize how much sugar they are actually consuming. On average, Americans consume 130 lbs of sugar per year or 1/3 lb of sugar per day! Let's consider the health effects of sugar, where it's hiding, why we have a hard time giving it up and how you can change your life by ending your relationship with this toxic substance.

When asked about the negative effects of dietary sugar, anyone who read last month's "Weighty Issue" article can probably answer: diabetes! This serious and unfortunately common condition is enough of a reason to avoid sugar. But there is even more to the story: excess sugar causes weight gain and obesity and has been linked to heart disease, hypertension, high cholesterol, cancer and fatty liver disease.

These are direct results of the way that our body metabolizes sugar. Sugar is converted to fat by the liver. Some of that fat is stored in the liver and over time, this results in a "fatty" liver called non-alcoholic steato-hepatitis (NASH) to differentiate from a similar condition that develops in alcoholics. The fat that is not stored in the liver is released into

the blood stream as LDL cholesterol which contributes to high cholesterol and inflammation. Sugar also directly feeds and fuels the growth of cancer cells.

So we know we don't want to eat sugar and we think we're not. Where is it hiding? In plain sight.



Sugar is in many of the everyday foods that we purchase thinking we are eating wholesome healthful foods. Sugar and high fructose corn syrup are used in almost all processed foods, especially those that are "low fat." Check the labels for all forms of sugar - if it says sugar or syrup, you want to avoid it. You also want to be cautious about products that have added

"starches" such as tapioca starch or potato starch. Starches and other grain-based foods that are highly processed can be considered "simple" carbohydrates and are quickly converted to sugar by our bodies.

Now we know where it is - for some, it may be a simple choice to avoid sugar in its many forms, but for most, it's likely a difficult process to give up sugar. There are two main reasons for this. First, sugar is addictive - the effect on our brain is similar to that of drugs - stimulation of our reward center that we experience as pleasure. With frequent use, we build up a tolerance and our brain responds less and we require more sugar to get the same stimulation and reward. This propels us into a cycle of cravings and overeating.

Another reason that sugar is so addictive is that undesirable bacteria and yeast throughout the body, but primarily in the digestive tract, love sugar as a fuel source.

These organisms interfere with our satiety signalling mechanisms such that we don't feel full or satisfied after eating sugary foods. What we do feel is the desire for more food, specifically more sugary foods.

Now we know sugar is unhealthy, hidden in processed foods and highly addictive, so how do we eliminate it? Start by eliminating junk food that you know has high amounts of refined sugars: soda, candy, cupcakes. Read labels so that you know what and how much you're eating and can purchase items with little or no added sugar. If sugar is in the top three ingredients listed, it's probably too much. Eat fruit for a sweet treat, but keep fruit for after meals or eat it with some fat and protein to slow the absorption of fruits natural sugars. Consider a body ecology cleanse at our clinic to rebalance your GI flora so that you are in control of your food choices. Health starts at home and only you can decide what you put into your body. I hope that this information helps inform your choices so that you can start enjoying true health.



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