

## **No thanks, I'm sweet enough – beware of the excess added sugars in your diet**

The average person consumes in excess of 50 kilograms of sugar per year! Refined sugars are addictive, immunosuppressive and will destroy your body's ability to regulate blood sugar and insulin metabolism. Anything more than five kilograms of sucrose per year accelerates ageing, creates a breeding ground for yeast and fungus in the gastrointestinal tract, and will leach important minerals from vital organ reserves. So why do we continue to consume so much of it?

Because sugars are hidden in everything. Packaged and processed foods are particularly dangerous because in most cases you aren't even aware of which sugars you're eating. Sugars are a form of carbohydrate and are actually built of sugar molecules, called saccharides. There are two forms of carbohydrates, we used to know them as simple and complex carbohydrates, these days they are called high or low GI.

An easy way to get your head around the difference between the good and bad carbs is this:

*If it's 'ose' out it goes!*

Simple carbs (high GI) end in the suffix 'ose'. Check food labels, and if you see an ingredient ending in 'ose' it contains simple high GI carbs. The simpler the sugar, the more sweet it is and fruits and honey, which contain fructose, are considered the sweetest. Simple carbohydrates enter your blood stream fast and then your body runs through a series of processes trying to compensate for the rush of energy it is receiving, and it generally ends up over-compensating.

Complex carbs (low GI) are long and complicated strings of simple sugars, which are slower to break down and be digested and are known as starches. Starches don't cause blood sugar fluctuations the way simple sugars do. They also taste less sweet because they are a larger molecule and don't easily fit into the sweet receptors of the taste buds like the simple sugars do.

Sugars themselves are not bad for you, but like with all foods, you should try to keep them as close to nature as possible. Go for the less refined and processed sugars, and remember to balance out between the complex and simple sugars. If you want to sweeten foods stick with raw honey, molasses or real maple syrup, which are all closer to nature.

The number of people with Type 2 diabetes in Australia has trebled over the past twenty years and many of them are also overweight. The combination of diabetes and obesity can increase the risks of cardiovascular disease. An underlying chromium deficiency may be contributing to or exacerbating these conditions.

As a naturopath I have seen ever-increasing numbers of clients deficient in chromium. Chromium is an essential nutrient necessary for the normal metabolism of carbohydrates, fats and proteins. A deficiency in chromium can lead to cravings for sweet foods and improper glucose metabolism, causing hypoglycaemia and increasing the chances of obesity or diabetes. The increase in our consumption of refined and processed foods, void of chromium and other minerals, is contributing to this deficiency.

Raising chromium levels in the body can be done by consuming chromium-rich foods such as mushrooms, meats, animal fats, fish, honey, brown sugar, brown grains like whole-wheat and rye breads, grapes and raisins, and brewer's yeast.

If you think you may be low in chromium check with your local naturopath. In the meantime, know that you are sweet enough and don't need a diet rich in refined and processed simple sugars.