

# Build a Healthy Plate With Fewer Added Sugars

## Nutrition and Wellness Tips for Young Children: Provider Handbook for the Child and Adult Care Food Program



**Sugars are found naturally in fruits, milk, yogurt, and cheese.** However, the majority of sugars in typical American diets are “added sugars.” You can help children stay healthier as they grow by providing them with foods and beverages with fewer added sugars. It is important to remember that:



- **The extra calories in added sugars can make children feel full before they’ve had a chance to get the nutrients they need from other foods.**
- **The extra calories from added sugars also make it harder for children to grow at a healthy weight, and may contribute to weight gain.**
- **Added sugars are often called “empty calories” because they add calories to the diet without offering any nutrients.**
- **Sugar also increases the risk for dental cavities.**

### What can I do to limit foods and beverages with added sugars?

Be aware of sources of added sugars. Sodas, fruit drinks, cakes, pies, cookies, dairy desserts, and candy are the major sources of added sugars for children and adolescents 2 to 18 years old. For younger children, sugar-sweetened beverages and cold cereals are the top sources. Offer foods that have little or no added sugars. Here are some food substitutions to choose for **children 2 years and older**:

#### Instead of:

- Flavored milk
- Sweetened yogurt
- Ice cream or frozen yogurt
- Sweetened breakfast cereals
- Cookies
- Canned fruit in syrup, or sweetened applesauce
- Doughnuts, pies, or cakes for desserts
- Jam or jelly
- Soda, fruit-flavored drinks, fruit cocktails, or fruit punch

#### Choose:

- Unflavored fat-free or low-fat milk (1% fat or less)
- Fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt topped with fruit
- Frozen fruits that don’t contain added sugars, or frozen 100% fruit bars
- Cereals with little or no added sugars, whole-grain cereals, or oatmeal with fruit
- Whole-grain crackers, graham crackers, or plain animal crackers
- Fruit canned in water or 100% fruit juice; unsweetened applesauce
- Fruits (fresh, frozen, or canned in water or 100% juice), fruit salads, or baked fruits (like baked apples or pears)
- 100% fruit spread
- Water, fat-free or low-fat milk, or 100% juice (no more than one ½-cup serving, once per day)



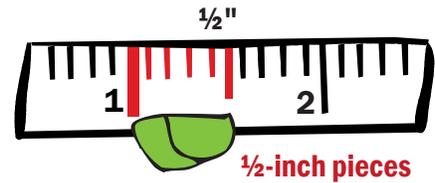
### Code Words for Added Sugars

- ▶ **Added sugars** are sugars added to foods during processing, preparation, or at the table.
- ▶ **Look at the ingredient list on the back of a package.** Do you see high fructose corn syrup, white sugar, brown sugar, honey, molasses, corn syrup, corn syrup solids, raw sugar, malt syrup, maple syrup, pancake syrup, or ingredients ending in “-ose” (such as maltose or fructose)? All of these are added sugars.
- ▶ **Choose foods that do not list added sugars** among the first three ingredients in the ingredient list.



### For children younger than 4 years old:

- **Cut raw fruit in small pieces no larger than one-half inch (1/2") to prevent choking.**
- **Slice grapes and other round foods in half.**
- **Hard fruit chunks, chewy fruit snacks, and certain types of candy pose choking hazards.**
- **Supplement A on page 77 for more information on choking hazards.**



### How can I serve fewer foods with added sugars?

Children are born preferring sweet flavors. When children regularly taste sugar and sweet flavors, they learn to prefer these sweet flavors more and more. Adding little or no sugar and choosing foods and beverages lower in “added sugars” can help children learn to like foods that are not as sweet. Here are some tips:

- ▶ **Serve fresh fruit more often** instead of fruit-based desserts, such as fruit pies, cobblers, and crisps.
- ▶ **Offer raisins** instead of chewy fruit snacks, candy, or sweets.



*There is usually very little fruit in chewy fruit snacks or “fruit-flavored” beverages (often called fruit drinks or fruit punch).*

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup (228g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 250	Calories from Fat 110
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 12g	18%
Saturated Fat 3g	15%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 30mg	10%
Sodium 470mg	20%
Total Carbohydrate 31g	10%
Dietary Fiber 0g	0%
<b>Sugars 6g</b>	
Protein 5g	
Vitamin A 4%	Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 20%	Iron 4%

- ▶ **Purchase whole-grain breads and cereals with little or no added sugars.** Low-sugar cereals should have no more than 6 grams of sugar per serving, according to the Nutrition Facts label. Top cereal or oatmeal with fruit to sweeten the taste.
- ▶ **Offer fresh foods and less-processed foods.**
- ▶ **Choose not to offer sweets as rewards.** By offering food as a reward for good behavior, children learn to think that some foods are “better” than other foods. Reward the children in your care with kind words and comforting hugs, or give them nonfood items, like stickers, to make them feel special.



## How can I encourage kids to eat a balanced variety of foods without added sugars?

Some kids may need time to adjust to a less sweet flavor. Introduce less-sweetened versions of the same foods that were previously sweetened. Here are some ways to help kids eat fewer added sugars:

- ▶ **Make food fun!** Serve a festive drink with no more than ½-cup serving of fruit juice, once per day, and add an orange, lemon, or lime wedge as a garnish. During the rest of the day, offer most fruit whole or cut up, to get more fiber.
- ▶ **Cook together.** Children learn about foods when they help prepare them. Instead of sweetened yogurt, have kids make their own “fruit and yogurt parfait” by topping nonfat plain yogurt with whole-grain cereal and fresh or frozen berries, banana slices, fruit canned in 100% juice, or their favorite fruit.



### Support the Message

- ▶ **Send the message home.** Share the *Nibbles for Health* take-home newsletter for parents on juice. [http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles\\_Newsletter\\_19.pdf](http://www.teamnutrition.usda.gov/Resources/Nibbles/Nibbles_Newsletter_19.pdf)
- ▶ **Eat a variety of foods with fewer added sugars, and kids will too.** They learn from watching you. See *Choose MyPlate* for more ideas. <http://www.choosemyplate.gov/preschoolers/daily-food-plans/about-empty-calories.html>



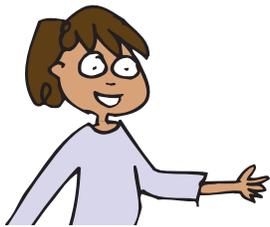
## Activities

### How can I put this information into practice?

- ▶ **Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose breakfast cereals and other packaged foods with less total sugars,** and use the ingredient list to choose foods with little or no added sugars.
- ▶ **Compare ingredient lists for food products you serve on your child care menu.** Sometimes foods and beverages contain “hidden sugars,” or added sugars that you may not know about.
- ▶ **Look for added sugars on ingredient lists** (see *Code Words for Added Sugars* on page 48). Which products have added sugars as the first three ingredients in the list?

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**Take a look at your current weekly or cycle menu.**

- ▶ **Circle items that contain added sugars on the menu.**
- ▶ **Circle the menu items to which you typically add additional sugar** (for example: pancake syrup to waffles, or brown sugar to oatmeal).
- ▶ **Find menu items low in added sugars. What are some foods that can be served instead of the circled menu items next month?** Review this tip sheet and the added sugars substitution chart on page 47 for some ideas.

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- ▶ **Write down two to three ways that you can serve items without added sugars in next month's menu.** Think about food choices that are lower in added sugars, what to look for when food shopping, or different ways to prepare foods without adding additional sugar.

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