

Controlling Sugar in Children's Diets

Excessive sugar is an unnecessary “evil” in everyone’s diet, including our children's. It is our task as parents to help our children make good choices about their foods and snacks. One place to begin is to read labels carefully. Any ingredient ending with “ose” is a derivative of sugar.

The best time to start controlling sugar intake is in infancy. Start your baby out by introducing foods without sugar. Exposing children to healthier choices of foods when they are young will help them develop more nutritious diets as adults. For example, fresh fruit is an obvious source of natural sugar; add peanut butter to apple slices and you have a nutritious and appealing snack. Other good snacks are rice cakes or sugarless, whole wheat cereal.

Most parents cannot totally eliminate sweets from their children’s diets. Our holidays, birthdays, and other celebrations traditionally include desserts. Toddlers, influenced by the bright array of candy in the supermarket, can become insistent in their requests for a sugary treat. Some techniques that may be useful at this stage are:

1. Allow your child to have one small candy instead of a whole bar.
2. Instead of a sugary drink, offer club soda mixed with a little fruit juice.
3. Reduce the availability of sugar treats in the home and provide healthy snacks instead.
4. Teach your child to brush his teeth within thirty minutes of eating a sweet.
5. Join your child in increased exercise to offset the empty calories of sugar; keep the focus on health versus appearance.
6. Restrict sugary desserts to one or two times a week instead of every night or with every meal.
7. Support and praise your child in her efforts to make healthy choices.

In conclusion, here is a recipe that is as much fun to make as it is to eat! Mix a small package of non-fat dry milk with 2-3 tablespoons of fresh peanut butter and 1 teaspoon of honey. Roll small balls of the mixture in wheat germ, raisins, or coconut. Mmmmm!