

Sugar is a natural enemy that is hidden in many foods

By Mandy Kendall

Sugarcaine. I have not spelled it wrong. Scientists are now starting to call sugar “legal cocaine” as studies are revealing that sugar can potentially be as dangerous as the class A drug.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1 in 3 children born in 2000 will become diabetic.



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The *New York Times* recently reported that childhood obesity and the incidence of type 2 diabetes in children are rising at an alarming rate, adding an additional concern that “the disease progresses more rapidly in children than in adults and is harder to treat.”

There are many factors that influence whether someone will contract diabetes, but it is accepted that sugar is one of the biggest culprits.

We need sugar to survive, but not in the form and the amounts we are exposed to everyday. Our bodies are designed to digest natural food and turn that into glucose that circulates in the blood and is then used as our energy source. A very fine balance is required as too much, or too little, glucose in the

blood can have dire consequences.

Insulin is the hormone that is used to soak up excess sugar in the blood to prevent high levels harming us. However, the barrage of sugar that our bodies get from modern diets can be too much for insulin to handle and things go wrong.

Think of Lucille Ball, in that famous scene in the chocolate factory. Lucille (insulin) is standing and watching the chocolates (sugar) go by her on the conveyor belt (blood stream) and she is not allowed to let too many go through at once. All is well while there aren't too many chocolates on the belt (normal blood sugar levels), then all of a sudden there are more and more chocolates and she has to do something. So she starts picking them up, stuffing them under her hat, shoving them in her mouth, but all too soon she can't take anymore and great piles of chocolates go past her and there is nothing she can do about it. That, in essence, is exactly what happens in our bodies.

CNN reported that children get more than 20 percent of their daily calories from sugar, equating to about 2 pounds of refined sugar a week. Would we let our dogs drink soda and eat sugar-laden foods every day? So why do we let the kids?

Sugar is highly addictive and hidden in so many foods so here are some *Qwik-e* tips to help avoid the sugar traps.

If you are really craving sugar – Eat a piece of fruit. The fiber in the fruit stops the blood sugar levels from spiking too high and the sugar is in a natural form that is far better for your body.

Keep blood sugar levels balanced – This can be done by making sure you eat small amounts of food regularly so that you never get those energy slumps, caused by low blood sugar, that have you craving a quick fix. Kids are especially prone to this as they use up so much energy so quickly, so have them keep healthy snacks to hand (especially in school where the snack

options might not be so healthy). Trail mix provides a good balance of protein and carbohydrates to keep blood sugar levels steady. Just make sure you get the unsweetened stuff without candy in it.

Watch out for sneaky sugar – Condiments and dressings are often loaded with sugar (there is about a teaspoon of sugar in every tablespoon of ketchup). And let's face it, it is very easy to have more than just one tablespoon of ketchup. Sports drinks and most processed foods have sugar. Just look out for any ingredients with -ose at the end. Cereals can often be the biggest culprits and tend to set the kids up for a blood sugar spike early in the morning that plummets around mid morning, causing them to crave something sweet to bring their blood sugar levels back up again. Oatmeal sweetened with fresh or canned fruit is a very good alternative.

Slowly reduce sugar – It's an addiction after all and no one likes going cold turkey. Gradually swap out sodas for fruit juices diluted with fizzy water. However, be aware that fruit juice is also quite high in sugar so don't rely on this for too long. Mix a higher sugar content cereal with a low (or no sugar) cereal and slowly reduce the high sugar cereal while taste buds adapt.

Fat free – Often just means more sugar. They have to replace the fat with something. Check labels of low fat or fat free products and compare it to the full fat version. You might save a small amount of fat but gain much more sugar.

Diet sodas and artificial sweeteners – These will often have the same effect on your body that ordinary sugar does, as well as introducing chemicals into your system.

Protein and fiber – Adding protein and fiber to foods that convert to sugar quickly, like fruits and carbohydrates, will help slow down how quickly the sugar enters the bloodstream. Try, for example, Greek yogurt with fresh fruit or peanut

butter (unsweetened) on whole wheat toast.

Visit sites like this for more information.

If you really want to know what sugar can do to you, check out this site with 146 reasons for reducing your sugar intake.

The Mayo Clinic also has a great list of tips for reducing sugar and also how to recognize the different names for sugar on food packaging too.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and wellbeing topic, please feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.