

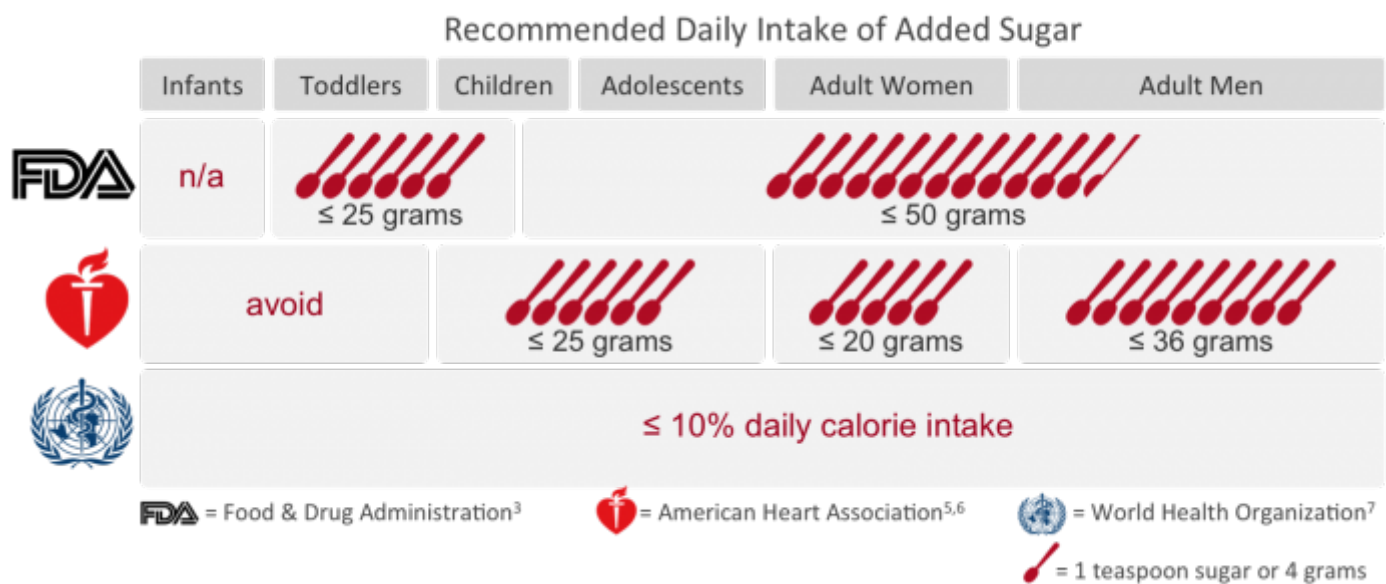
Recommended Daily Intake of Added Sugar

You probably know that we should **limit the amount of added sugars** in the foods we eat. But what exactly is an added sugar and how much is okay to eat each day?

The FDA defines added sugar as “sugars that are either added during the processing of foods, or are packaged as such, and include sugars (free, mono and disaccharides), syrups, naturally occurring sugars that are isolated from a whole food and concentrated so that sugar is the primary component (e.g. fruit juice concentrates), and other caloric sweeteners”.¹

The recommended daily intake of added sugars varies depending on the group making the recommendation. Below is a summary of the recommendations from the FDA (based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans written by the USDA and HHS), the American Heart Association, and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Daily Recommendations for Added Sugar:



US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Recommendation:

In May of 2016, the FDA updated its nutrition facts label requirements for packaged food, including a specific line for added sugar. This is the first time the nutrition facts label will include % Daily Value recommendations for added sugar.² Packaged food will be required to have the updated nutrition facts label by 2018.

Children (1-3 yo): Added sugar consumption should be no more than 10% of daily calories. This works out to be no more than 25 grams (6 teaspoons, 100 calories) of added sugar a day, based on

a 1,000 calorie diet.³

Adults: Added sugar consumption should be no more than 10% of daily calories. This works out to be no more than 50 grams (12.5 teaspoons, 200 calories) of added sugar a day, based on a 2,000 calorie diet.³

The FDA's recommendations for added sugar consumption comes from the Dietary Guidelines for Americans written by the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the USDA, which recommends limiting added sugar consumption to 10% of total daily calories.⁴

American Heart Association (AHA) Recommendation:

The AHA has written two position papers, citing recent scientific studies, in developing their recommendations for daily added sugar consumption. The AHA's recommendations for added sugar consumption are the most restrictive of the three organizations.

Children (0-2 yo): Avoid added sugars.⁵

Children (2-19 yo): Added sugar consumption should be no more than 25 grams (6 teaspoons, 100 calories) of added sugar a day.⁵

Adult Women: Added sugar consumption should be no more than 50% of daily discretionary calories. This works out to be no more than 20 grams (5 teaspoons, 80 calories) of added sugar a day, based on a 1,800 calorie diet.⁶

Adult Men: Added sugar consumption should be no more than 50% of daily discretionary calories. This works out to be no more than 36 grams (9 teaspoons, 144 calories) of added sugar a day, based on a 2,200 calorie diet.⁶

The AHA recommendations for children are based on results from observational studies, specifically the association between low consumption of added sugars and decreased cardiovascular disease risk factors. Additionally, the AHA recommends avoiding added sugars entirely for children younger than 2 yo because there is, in their opinion, minimal room for nutrient-free calories in the diets of very young children.⁵

The AHA added sugar recommendations for adults are based on the concept of discretionary calories. A person's discretionary calorie allowance can be determined by estimating the calories needed to meet nutrient requirements and then subtracting this amount from the estimated energy requirement

needed to maintain weight. The remaining calories are the discretionary calorie allowance. Intakes of added sugars, solid fats, and alcohol are included within the allowance for discretionary calories. The AHA added sugar recommendation approximates half of discretionary calories going to added sugar consumption and half to saturated fat consumption. They note that if a person chooses to consume alcohol, their intake of added sugar and saturated fat should be reduced to accommodate the calories from alcohol.⁶

World Health Organization (WHO) Recommendation:

Guidelines released by the WHO in 2015 advised that people should reduce the amount of free sugars to less than 10% of their total daily energy intake. The WHO defines free sugars as “monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods and beverages by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, and sugars naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit juice concentrates”.⁷ Note: The WHO’s definition of free sugars is slightly different from of the FDA’s definition of added sugar as it includes the sugar in fruit juice. The FDA does not considered the sugar in fruit juice as added sugar.

Children: Free sugar consumption should be no more than 10% of daily calories.⁷

Adults: Free sugar consumption consumption should be no more than 10% of daily calories.⁷

The WHO recommendations are the only recommendations that include limiting sugar from fruit juice. It is also important to note that the WHO make an additional recommendation to further reduce free sugar consumption to less than 5% of total daily energy intake as it would have additional benefits in reducing excess weight gain and dental caries (aka cavities) in adults and children.⁷

Summary

Despite the above recommendations on daily added sugar intake, there are no clinical studies that evaluate the impact of consuming added sugar to determine what is in fact a “safe” amount. What we do know for sure is that we are eating and drinking too much added sugar, and that doing so is **negatively affecting our health**. Personally, I do not believe that the pleasure you get from the habitual consumption of added sugar is worth the health risks. In my family we have a daily allotment of added sugar that we try to stay beneath, and I have found that it is not that hard to do once you stop regularly consuming sweet beverages, sugary treats, and foods with hidden added sugars. **Learn more about added sugar.**

References:

1. Definition of Added Sugar, FDA Federal Register, May 2016, § 101.9(c)(6)(iii) ([link](#))

2. FDA, Changes to the Nutrition Facts Label, May 2016 ([link](#))
3. Updated daily recommended values, FDA Federal Register, May 2016, § 101.9(c)(9) ([link](#))
4. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015-2020, Eighth Ed. ([link](#))
5. Added Sugars and Cardiovascular Disease Risk in Children. *Circulation*. August 22, 2016 ([link](#))
6. Dietary Sugars Intake and Cardiovascular Health. *Circulation*. 2009;120:1011-1020, ([link](#))
7. WHO Guideline: Sugar intake for adults and children, 2015 ([link](#))