How Sweet It Is: The Sugar Content of Food

Materials:
- pens/pencils
- paper
- 3” x 5” index cards
- writing surface (if needed)

Preparation:
If you like, bring along the food items in the quiz, or paste photos of the “dueling” items side by side on five sheets of paper or card stock to refer to while going over the quiz.

For the “small changes” activity, prepare nine 3” x 5” index cards with the “instead of” food item on one side and the “try” item on the other side. See the chart on the next page for the text.

Do you know how much sugar is in the foods you eat? Let’s take a short quiz comparing a couple of food choices and then discuss our answers.

(Pass out the paper and pens/pencils.)

Of these two options, which has more sugar?
Write your answers.
1. Eight ounces of regular cola or one 20-ounce bottle of citrus-flavored, vitamin-enhanced water?
2. One ounce of dried cherries or one ounce of fresh cherries?
3. One small orange or one cup of orange juice?
4. One-half cup of baked beans or two Snickers® Miniatures?
5. Eight ounces of an energy drink or eight ounces of sweet tea?

1. What did you write for the first one—which has more sugar, the regular cola or vitamin-enhanced water?

One 20-ounce bottle of citrus-flavored, vitamin-enhanced water has about 32.5 grams of sugar, while eight ounces of regular cola has about 27 grams of sugar. Always check the serving size and amount of sugar on the Nutrition Facts label. “Enhanced” waters often have as much—or more—sugar and calories as soda or juice. How many of you got that one right?

2. Let’s move on to the next one. Do dried cherries or fresh cherries have more sugar?

One ounce of dried cherries has 16 grams of sugar, while one ounce of fresh cherries has about four grams of sugar. Given that most of the water is removed from dried fruit, the amount of sugar-per-ounce is higher for dried fruit compared to its fresh equivalent. Dried fruit is still a healthy, vitamin-packed snack; just be mindful of portion size.

3. Moving on to number three: Does one small orange or one cup of orange juice have more sugar?

One cup of orange juice has around 23 grams of sugar, while one small orange has nine grams of sugar. You can count 100-percent fruit juices toward your daily recommended servings of fruit, but be aware of how much juice you are pouring. Depending on the fruit, one-quarter cup to one-half cup of juice equals the same number of calories as the whole fruit. For a low-sugar alternative, add a splash of fruit juice to sparkling water.
4. How are you doing so far? What about the baked beans versus the Snickers® Miniatures?

One-half cup of baked beans actually has more sugar—at 12 grams—than two Snickers® Miniatures, which have nine grams total. Should you opt for candy bars instead of baked beans? Not exactly. This simply demonstrates that sugar can pop up in unexpected places, such as canned goods and prepared sauces. Always check the Nutrition Facts label!

5. Finally, which has more sugar—eight ounces of an energy drink or eight ounces of sweet tea?

One eight-ounce can of energy drink has about 27 grams of sugar, while eight ounces of sweet tea has about 17. The can of energy drink has just as much sugar as a Snickers® bar! When it comes to sugary beverages like energy drinks, soda, sweet tea, or even vitamin-enhanced water, it’s not hard to drink through your entire daily calorie budget pretty quickly!

Did any of these answers surprise you? Which ones?

(Allow five minutes for discussion.)

Small Changes Can Make Life Sweeter

We can satisfy a sweet tooth by making simple modifications or substitutions. After all, denying ourselves sweets completely may make us want them that much more. Instead, making small changes can add up to big savings on sugar and overall calories!

(Pass out the index cards.)

Let’s look at how we can modify or replace sugary foods. The cards I passed out have an “instead of” side with a sugary item and a “try” side, which suggests a yummy alternative to keep us satisfied and on track to reach our goals.

Who wants to start us off? Read the “instead of” side, and then flip the card over to share the alternative.

(Continue reading through all of the cards. Items may be read in any order.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instead of</th>
<th>Try</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ c. of strawberry ice cream with 2 T. of chocolate (44 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>½ c. of vanilla ice cream with ½ c. of fresh, chopped strawberries and 1 T. of chocolate syrup (27 g. of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a medium blended iced, mocha with whipped cream (47 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>a medium iced coffee with sugar-free vanilla syrup (2 g. of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ c. of chocolate fudge ice cream (25 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>a low-fat Fudgsicle® bar (9 g of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 T. of raspberry jelly for a topping (24 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>topping with ½ c. of fresh raspberries (3 g. of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ c. of canned pineapple chunks in heavy syrup (22 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>½ c. of canned pineapple chunks in 100% juice (13 g of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ c. of dry cinnamon crunch cereal (10 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>a packet of instant, plain oatmeal made with skim milk and sprinkled with cinnamon (5 g. of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 c. of cranberry juice cocktail (33 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>¼ c. of cranberry juice cocktail mixed with sparkling water (8 g. of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a small box of raisins (25 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>17 grapes (13 g of sugar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>½ c. of baked beans (12 g. of sugar)</td>
<td>1 c. of green beans (1 g. of sugar)</td>
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