Quick ‘n Easy Program

Sugar Cube Demonstration
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Materials Needed:
• One 1-pound box of sugar cubes
• Food items listed under “Sugar Cube Activity”

Often the diet of people with weight issues contains excess empty calories from sugar. Reducing the amount of simple sugars in the diet is an easy way to reduce calorie intake and promote weight loss.

What Is Sugar? Sugar is classified as a carbohydrate. A carbohydrate is a macronutrient that provides energy in the body. One gram of sugar/carbohydrate provides four calories. Carbohydrates are essential for the body and help with energy and metabolism, and provide a good source of B vitamins. However, like any food, eating too many carbohydrates will cause an imbalance of the energy scale and may result in unwanted weight gain.

What Are Foods High in Sugar? Since sugar is a carbohydrate, all grain-type foods will breakdown into sugar. Potatoes and rice are also sources of sugar, as well as milk and dairy products and fruits. These foods, with the exception of milk, are considered complex carbohydrates. These foods all contain fiber, which helps aid in the digestion process. Other foods—such as candy, syrup, jam, jelly, chocolate, juice, soda, pastries, pies and cookies—are also sources of sugar, but lack nutrients and are commonly referred to as simple sugars. These foods are also a source of empty calories because of the lack of vitamins, minerals and fiber.

How Can I Reduce the Amount of Simple Sugars in My Diet? Reading food labels is an easy way to control the amount of simple sugars in your diet. When looking at the food label, look for the section called “Total Carbohydrates.” Directly below this number is the amount of sugar in the product. Dietary Fiber is also listed. A good rule of thumb is to eat foods that contain at least two grams of fiber in each serving. The grams of sugar should not be more than half of the total carbohydrates. For example, one serving of a whole-grain cereal usually contains 20 grams of total carbohydrates, 2 grams of fiber and 5 grams of sugar, compared to a “kids”-type cereal, which contains 25 grams of total carbohydrate, 1 gram of fiber and 15 grams of sugar. The whole-grain cereal is a better choice because of the dietary fiber, smaller amount of sugar and overall lower calorie amount per serving.

Monitoring the amount eaten by paying attention to the portion listed per serving is also a great way to limit overeating sugars. Stick to the serving size listed on the food label. A good test is to measure portions of commonly eaten foods and compare them to the recommended serving size. Shrinking actual amounts consumed to the recommended portion will reduce calories and sugar consumption.

Do the Math. Eliminating regular soda and juice from your diet is an easy way to reduce the sugar in the diet. Twelve ounces of soda provides 39 grams of sugar and 140 calories. If you were to eliminate just one 12-ounce soda a day, you would save 51,000 calories per year. That’s 14.6 pounds lost by just cutting out some sugar in the diet!
Sugar Cube Activity:
Goal: to increase awareness of amount of sugar hidden in common foods and beverages.

Instructions: The program presenter may bring in the following items, or ask members to volunteer to bring in these items:

1. Chocolate bar (1.55 ounce)
2. Donut (glazed)
3. Chocolate chip cookie
4. 12-ounce can regular soda
5. 8-ounce juice
6. 1 c. Cheerios
7. 1 c. Fruit Loops
8. 6 ounces regular yogurt (low fat)
9. 6 ounces fat-free yogurt
10. 8.5-ounce can of Red Bull
11. 20-ounce bottle of citrus-flavored vitamin-enhanced water

Have each participant guess how many teaspoons of sugar are in each item. Have them write down their guess. Then, have a volunteer stack the appropriate number of sugar cubes—according to the following answers—next to each item. One sugar cube equals one teaspoon.

Answers:
1. Chocolate bar contains 7 sugar cubes
2. Glazed donut contains 4 sugar cubes
3. Chocolate chip cookie contains 4 sugar cubes
4. 12-oz. regular soda contains 9 sugar cubes
5. 8-oz. juice contains 6 sugar cubes
6. 1 c. Cheerios contains less than 1 sugar cube
7. 1 c. Fruit Loops contains 3.5 sugar cubes
8. 6-oz. regular yogurt contains 7 sugar cubes
9. 6-oz. fat free yogurt contains 3 sugar cubes
10. 8.5-oz. can of Red Bull contains 7 sugar cubes
11. 20-oz. bottle of citrus-flavored vitamin-enhanced water contains 8 sugar cubes

Discussion:
2. How can you reduce sugar in the diet?
3. What did you learn from the demonstration? Did the sugar content of any of the items surprise you at all during the demonstration?