



Is this Added Sugar or Natural Sugar??

June 24, 2015

Cathy Mazanec, MS, RDN, CSSD, LDN

You may have heard that the World Health Organization (WHO) released its new Sugar Guidelines which recommend keeping Added Sugar to less than 5% of our total calories or 6 teaspoons of Added Sugar per day.

To give you an idea of what 5% of your total calories looks like, check out this [chart](#) to see how many grams of Added Sugar this means for you each day.

And, if you're just starting out on your sugar reduction journey, you may find this post about [Hidden Sugar](#) helpful.

If you have already taken the leap to slash sugar out of your eating plan, you have likely experienced the shock and awe of how much sugar is in your favorite foods. This, then, is usually followed by frustration when you try to determine how much of that sugar is Added Sugar versus Natural Sugar. When I work with clients to reduce their sugar intake a few questions naturally arise. Let's look at these questions closely.

How do I tell how much Sugar is in my favorite packaged foods?

First, check the Nutrition Facts label to see how many grams of Sugar per serving the food contains.

Nutrition Facts	Amount/serving	% DV*	Amount/serving	% DV*
	Total Fat 6g	9%	Total Carb 21g	5%
Serv Size 2 Tbsp (33g)	Sat Fat 1g	5%	Fiber 0g	0%
Servings 16	Trans Fat 0g		Sugars 18g	
Calories 90	Cholest 0mg	0%	Protein 0g	
Fat Cal 50	Sodium 280mg	12%		

You do this by checking the line under Total Carb that says Sugars. While perusing the label, be sure to also check the serving size and number of servings per container to ensure you are eating only one serving.

The grams of sugar listed are for one serving and sometimes the servings per package may be more than one.



Next, check the Ingredient List on the package for different names of sugars.

Did you know there are over 56 different names for sugar? Become familiar with this list so you can easily recognize when sugar has been added to your food.

Sometimes you might see 5 or 6 different Added Sugars listed on an Ingredient List like this one below. This is a big clue that most of the sugar grams on this Nutrition Facts label are from Added Sugars.

Nutrition Facts	Amount/serving		% DV*	
		Total Fat 1.5g	9%	Total Carb 27g
Serv Size 1 cup (33g)	Sat Fat 1g	5%	Fiber 0g	0%
Servings about 9	Trans Fat 0g		Sugars 13g	
Calories 120	Cholest 0mg	0%	Protein 0g	
Fat Cal 15	Sodium 280mg	12%		

INGREDIENTS: enriched flour (wheat flour, niacin, reduced iron, thiamin mononitrate, riboflavin, folic acid), corn syrup, sugar, soybean and palm oil, corn syrup solids, dextrose, high fructose corn syrup, fructose, glycerin, contains 2% or less of cocoa, modified corn starch, salt, calcium carbonate

Another clue is where sugars fall in the Ingredient List. By law, ingredients in the Ingredient List are listed in descending order of prevalence by weight. So, if sugar is one of the first 3 ingredients, then likely, most of the grams of sugar in that food are from Added Sugars.

What About Natural Sugar?

At this point, many clients often ask “What about Natural Sugars? Do I have to count Natural Sugars in my daily Added Sugar allotment? And, how do I determine if the sugar listed on the Nutrition Facts label is Natural Sugar?”

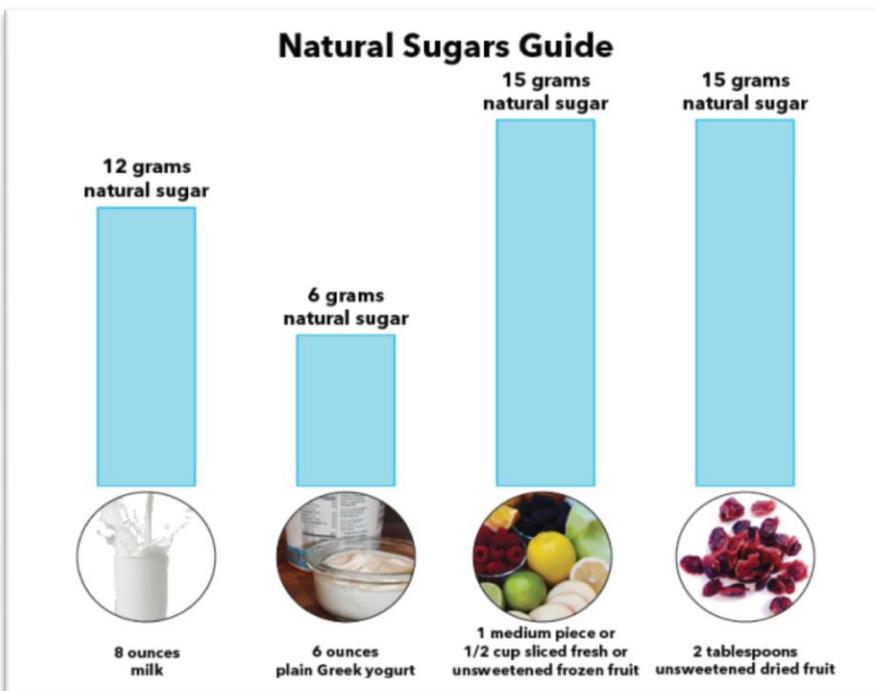
This part is a little tricky. So, it helps to know a few key points.

- **Added Sugars** are sugars from external sources that are added to a food or recipe. They **do not occur naturally in the food** so they **are** counted in your daily Added Sugar allotment.
- **Natural Sugars** are sugars that **occur naturally in a food**. Natural Sugars occurring naturally **in** a food **are not** counted in your daily Added Sugar allotment.

There are basically 2 types of sugar that naturally occur within a food: Lactose (milk sugar) and Fructose (fruit sugar).

Adjusting for Natural Sugars

Using the stats in this table can help you identify grams of Natural Sugars on the food label.



Using this table, if a food product contains fruit or dairy, subtract the appropriate amount of Natural Sugar from the grams of sugar listed on the Nutrition Facts label. Then, the remaining grams of sugar are Added Sugar. For example:

6 ounces vanilla Greek yogurt
20 grams Total Sugar
- 6 grams Natural Sugar (lactose) in yogurt
<hr/>
14 grams Added Sugar

Natural Sugars That DO Count as Added Sugar

- Crystalline Fructose granules can now be purchased in the supermarket and are used to sweeten some “healthier” packaged foods in health food stores. If fructose is listed in the Ingredient List, then it is not naturally occurring IN the food so it is an Added Sugar.
- Fruit juice is the natural sugar extracted from fruit. When you eat a piece of whole fruit, there is only a small amount of juice (fructose) in the piece of fruit. But, once you extract the juice from multiple pieces of fruit to make one glass of juice you end up with a glass of “sugar”. So, fruit juice is considered an Added Sugar (whether you’re drinking it or using it in a recipe.) One 4 ounce glass of juice counts as 15 grams of Added Sugar. Yikes!
- Natural sugars like honey, maple syrup, molasses and agave nectar are naturally occurring but they are simple sugars added to foods so they count as Added Sugar. One teaspoon of either contains about 4 grams of Added Sugar.

Tips for Steering Clear of Added Sugar

Follow these tips to reduce added sugars in your foods so you can spend your daily Added Sugar allotment the way that’s the most fun for you.

1. Eat mostly fresh, whole foods. Whole foods from nature do not contain Added Sugar.
2. Eliminate fruit juices, even fresh squeezed, and opt for a whole piece of fruit instead.
3. Buy **unsweetened** Greek yogurt and cereals. Then add fresh fruit for sweetness.