

Empty Calories Count

Many of the foods and drinks Americans consume contain empty calories. What are empty calories? These are calories from solid fats or added sugars. Solid fats and added sugars add calories to foods and drinks but provide few or no nutrients.

Solid Fats

Fats that are solid at room temperature are solid fats. Some solid fats are found naturally in foods, while others are added when foods are processed or added when made at home or a restaurant. Most of these solid fats are unhealthy and you should limit them in your diet.

Foods with solid fats include: butter and products made with butter (cakes, cookies, and pastries), fat or marbling in meat products, shortening, margarine, whole milk products, fried foods, poultry skin and some oils like coconut or palm oil.

Added Sugars

Added sugars are sugars and syrups that are added when foods or drinks are prepared. Added sugars provide little to no nutrients but are full of empty calories. Eating or drinking too many added sugars can lead to serious health issues, like obesity, type 2 diabetes, inflammation in the liver, heart disease, weak bones, poor dental health and cognitive decline.

Foods and drinks with added sugar include: sweetened applesauce, canned fruit, fruit snacks, sports drinks, many specialty coffee and tea flavored drinks, candy, cookies, sugar-sweetened cereals, fruit-flavored drinks, sweetened alcoholic drinks, pasta sauces, granola bars and yogurt.

Drinks with added sugar don't satisfy you as well as foods that need chewing. You may not feel hungry after drinking a high calorie drink, but this feeling won't last long. A 6 ounce glass of orange juice has about twice as many calories as an orange. The orange takes longer to eat and will keep you satisfied longer than the juice. The fiber in the orange will slow the time it takes your body to digest that food. Plus, eating an orange lets you enjoy texture and juiciness.

The amount of these foods and drinks in your diet and how often you consume them will decide how they impact your health. If sweetened drinks are less than 8 ounces per day, their impact may be small.

Fruit juices, soda, and other sweetened drinks are often sold in large amounts – 12 to 20 to even 64 ounces. Eat and drink less added sugar by being aware of the ingredients and reading the Nutrition Facts label.

Reading a Nutrition Facts Label

One teaspoon of sugar is equal to 4 grams of sugar. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics you limit the amount of added sugar you consume to:

- **Women**
 - 6 teaspoons (24 grams)
- **Men**
 - 9 teaspoons (36 grams)
- **Pre-teens and teens**
 - 8 teaspoons (32 grams)
- **Children**
 - 5 teaspoons (20 grams)

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size	2/3 cup (55g)
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 8g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	5%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	20%
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%
<small>* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.</small>	

*Look for Added Sugars on the food label to see how much added sugar is in one serving.

Need to satisfy your sweet craving?

Go for naturally sweet options. Enjoy the sweetness of fresh fruit or look for recipes made with fruit. Try freezing grapes or dipping blueberries in low-fat vanilla yogurt and freezing for a refreshing treat.

Enjoy a small piece of dark chocolate. The higher the amount of cocoa, the less the sugar content. Also, dark chocolate is a source of antioxidants and it may help lower blood pressure and protect your heart. Eat 1 to 2 ounces per day.

Teach Back

What is the most important thing you learned from this handout?

What changes will you make in your diet/lifestyle, based on what you learned today?

If you are a UW Health patient and have more questions please contact UW Health at one of the phone numbers listed below. You can also visit our website at www.uwhealth.org/nutrition.

Nutrition clinics for UW Hospital and Clinics (UWHC) and American Family Children's Hospital (AFCH) can be reached at: **(608) 890-5500**.

Nutrition clinics for UW Medical Foundation (UWMF) can be reached at: **(608) 287-2770**.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright 4/2019 University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#399