



## ***The 411 on Sugar and Cancer***

Many people have heard or read that sugar feeds cancer. While eating too much sugar can affect health, the link between sugar and cancer is complex. Here are some facts:

- Our bodies need glucose (sugar) for energy or “fuel.” All cells need sugar to grow (this includes normal cells and cancer cells).
- When you eat, your blood sugar (glucose) rises in response to digestion. As blood sugar increases, the body releases insulin and other hormones. This helps to lower and maintain a normal blood sugar level.
- Simple sugars, such as cookies, white bread and sugared drinks are broken down to glucose quickly and cause more insulin to be released to lower blood sugar.
- Complex carbohydrates, such as whole wheat bread and oatmeal do not affect blood sugar the same as simple sugars. These take longer to digest, in part due to their fiber, and do not cause blood sugar levels to rise as fast.
- When insulin rises too much in response to foods we eat, other hormones are released also.
- These high insulin and hormone levels seem to produce an environment that favors cancer cell growth.
- In summary, sugar does not actually feed cancer, but there is a relationship between sugar and all cell growth.

### ***Too Much of Anything...***

You don't have to avoid every bit of sugar in your diet. The key is moderation and smart choices. Limit or avoid simple or “refined” sugars and eat more whole foods. This gives you enough protein, fat, and fiber. These all help glucose and insulin levels stay normal.

- Eat natural sugar, like that found in fruit. This is a better choice than simple sugars found in candy, cake, pie, and baked goods. High-sugar foods are less healthy, so don't eat too many of these. Avoid drinks very high in sugar, such as soda and fruit drinks. It is OK to have 100% fruit juice, but stick to a 6-ounce serving. Avoid fruit drinks that don't have any real fruit juice.
- Limit your “treats,” such as dessert, to a couple of times each week and have a small serving size. After making diet changes, cravings often lessen.
- Focus on eating whole foods such as vegetables, fruit, 100% whole wheat breads, legumes (beans, lentils, and peas), nuts, and seeds. Whole fruits have many cancer-fighting phytochemicals and they are full of fiber.
- Eat enough protein, some fat and fiber every day. This helps your body digest sugar bit by bit and helps the body use the nutrients from food best. Also, you avoid your body making too much insulin. For example, instead of apple pie for a snack, try a fresh apple and peanut butter. Instead of a candy bar, try some dried fruit and mixed nuts for a snack that lasts!

### ***The Sweet Truth***

Sugar gives energy to *all* cells in our body, but too much sugar can cause the body to produce too much insulin and other hormones, and this is not good for you. Aim to eat a healthy, well-balanced diet that will put you on the road to health.