



AWARENESS

HIDDEN SUGARS

Sugar Awareness Week takes place this year from the 11th – 17th November 2019. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), “the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages has been suggested as a contributory factor to the rising levels of childhood obesity being recorded in many countries worldwide.” Showing some of the highest rates of childhood obesity in the world, South Africa is no exception.

Despite being aware of the dangers of excessive sugar consumption, including the onset of type 2 diabetes and heart disease, surveys show that when it comes to knowing the actual sugar content in foods and beverages, many people are surprised to realise that there are in fact plenty of “healthy food” choices containing high amounts of sugar, often disguised under different names; such as:

- Agave nectar
- Fructose
- Caramel
- Maltodextrin
- Maple syrup

On the list of foods and beverages containing “hidden sugars,” be sure to watch out for the following:

- Juices – some fruit juices (especially those which are canned or preserved) can contain up to 10 teaspoons of sugar, equivalent to that of a fizzy or energy drink.

- Smoothies – even those freshly made often contain frozen yoghurt, flavoured powders, fruit juice, honey and syrups that are high in sugar and calories.
- Baby and toddler pre-prepared foods – commercial baby foods and purees have been found to contain too much sugar, so much so that the WHO will soon be implementing bans on added sugars in foods for children under 36 months old.
- Cereals bars – studies have found that granola and kids cereal bars are often “serial offenders” in terms of their high sugar content, especially since they are marketed as healthy ‘on the go’ snacks or breakfast substitutes.
- Tinned soups and more – watch out for hidden sugars when it comes to canned food products, especially fruit, soups and sauces.

How much sugar is too much?

According to the American Heart Association, the maximum amount of sugars you should eat in a day are:

- Men: 150 calories per day (37.5 grams or 9 teaspoons)
- Women: 100 calories per day (25 grams or 6 teaspoons)

To make sure that you’re within limits, always read food labels, and if you’re overweight or diabetic, you should probably avoid sugar as much as possible.