

Fructose? Schmuctose!

Weight loss is an incredibly big and complex subject, and I could write about it for years. But this time I'm going to look at fructose. Ever heard of it? It's a sugar found in fruits.

Sucrose is the white cane sugar sold in super markets. People who want to lower their sugar intake may have looked for supplements and alternatives. Artificial sweeteners like sucralose, aspartame, saccharine and others can all have detrimental effects on health. Fructose is one of those substitutes which is naturally derived, but in quantity is anything but natural. There are packets of it in supermarkets, usually in the health food aisle.

Now, eating a couple of pieces of fresh fruit per day is great. Fruit is a whole food, and it contains fibre, water, vitamins and minerals and a modest amount of fructose. But when you eat too much fruit, or take the fructose out and add it to other foods where it doesn't belong, then problems follow.

Once it's inside your liver, fructose is converted to glycerol, which is a basic component of triglycerides. Remember that word? It's one of the things that's usually checked when you get your cholesterol tested. Both sucrose and fructose tend to promote conversion of the sugars to fat, and therefore eventual weight gain. It also increases your blood pressure, impairs glucose tolerance and promotes insulin resistance. All of these become what's called Metabolic Syndrome, and that can eventually lead to diabetes and heart disease.

Do you know someone with gout? Gout is the crystallisation of uric acid, often in the foot, but can be elsewhere too. Fructose raises uric acid levels and this also leads to hypertension and heart disease. All these are nasty risks, but they are easily avoided by lowering your fructose consumption. Don't buy it in packets and use it in place of sugar. Read your packet labels and reject those with fructose as the sweetener. Avoid high quantities of supermarket fruit juices or overconsumption of fruit, and you've just taken one decent step to improving your health.

Best of all though, see your natural health practitioner for a dietary assessment and some guidelines for the future.

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[Advice in these columns is of a general nature only and is not to be taken as specific treatment.]