

SWEET TALKING

Sugar has been in the news in recent months, following publication of a number of studies identifying links between sugar intake and dental problems, obesity, heart disease and the increase in the number of cases of Type 2 Diabetes (the kind that isn't insulin dependent).

The difficulty for most people is that it's often hard to make sense of the advice on offer. Part of the problem lies in the different measurements used. Newspapers and magazines – even the NHS when referring to high-sugar foods – like to talk in terms of sugar cubes, or teaspoonfuls of sugar. That's all very well, but most of our sugar intake is already in the food we eat, and it isn't easy to visualize the number of sugar cubes in a can of soup! [In fact, a standard 400-gram can of the best-selling tomato soup contains about 10g of sugar – equivalent to 2½ teaspoonfuls.]

The recommended maximum daily intake is 90 grams for men and 70g for women, though these are average figures and may need adjustment in relation to your body mass and level of physical activity. Of the totals, 20g accounts for the sugar we add to food or drinks ourselves – this is equivalent to five teaspoonfuls a day. The remainder – 70g for men, 50g for women – relates to the sugar already in the food we eat. Some of this is natural, as in sweet-tasting fruits, but most is added by food manufacturers. This is where problems lurk!

Sugar is a complex ingredient in our diet. It certainly makes some foods more palatable and can provide a quick energy boost, but the evidence shows that it can be seriously damaging when taken in excess. It is high in calories but has little or no nutritional value, so it makes sense to cut down as much as you can.

Most of us don't have time to look at nutrition information while we do our food shopping, but it's much easier to find a couple of minutes to look at these details after returning home. The labels will show the sugar content of most processed foods, but some manufacturers try to disguise sugar under a whole range of other names. Look out for ingredients ending in *-ose*; – sucrose, glucose, fructose, maltose and lactose are all sugars, as are molasses, hydrolised starch, invert sugar, corn syrup and honey. If you discover that you're buying a high-sugar product, look for an alternative with less sugar next time you go shopping.

However, foods low in sugar may be high in other potentially harmful ingredients, so if you haven't time to do a detailed count, look at the 'traffic light' colour codes on the packaging, and choose products with more green or amber codes, avoiding reds as much as you can. That way, you should end up with a reasonably well-balanced shopping basket. Check out the Heaton Road Health Tip overleaf for help in deciding what to avoid.

FLU JAB DAY

We'll be holding our annual flu vaccination clinic on

SATURDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2015

between **9.00.am.** and **12.00. Noon.** Free vaccinations are available to all patients **aged over 65 years**, to all other patients with **heart disease, diabetes, chest problems such as bronchitis or asthma, or long term kidney disease, and to all women who are pregnant and anyone who is a carer**, whether in a professional or voluntary capacity.

If you are in one of these categories it is important that you are protected against influenza. You don't need to book an appointment, but please check in at the Reception desk on arrival – you won't be able to use the automatic check-in machine, as it can only deal with pre-arranged appointments.

SURGERY UPDATE

The surgery will be closed for staff training from 12.00.noon. on:

Thursday 22 October 2015

We will also close as usual for staff training between 12.00.noon and 1.30.pm. every Thursday.

If you need medical assistance at any time when the surgery is closed, please call the Out of Hours Service on 111 or, in an emergency, call 999.

PATIENTS' GROUP

The next quarterly meeting of our Patients' Group will be held on Tuesday 8 September, starting at 6.00.pm. As the Surgery is open late on Tuesdays the meeting will be held upstairs – please ask for directions at Reception.

Any patient registered with the Practice can attend and take part in the discussions – new faces are always very welcome. Just come along and take a seat!

PLEASE PLAY FAIR!

We are still having problems with the number of patients who are not keeping the appointments booked for them, both here at the surgery and at local hospitals.

If you no longer need your appointment, or you are unable to attend, please let us know as soon as possible, so that the appointment can be offered to someone else. For hospital appointments, you'll find the contact number on your appointment letter

Simply not turning up for an appointment means that the doctors or other health professionals will waste valuable time, and other patients who may urgently need appointments will suffer unnecessary delays. Please help us to give the best service we can to **all** of our patients!

DO YOU GET BREATHLESS?

If you have lung problems, you can keep up to date with the latest techniques for managing your condition by taking part in the British Lung Foundation's local Breathe Easy group. It meets at the Benfield Park Healthcare and Diagnostic Centre, at 1.30.pm on the first Monday of every month, usually for a couple of hours. The Centre is on the old Walkergate Hospital site in Benfield Road; there's plenty of parking space, and it isn't far from Walkergate Metro. There's no need to book and friends and family are welcome to come with you. If you'd like more information, call 03000 030555, or go online at www.blf.org.uk/Newcastle-East. Why not give it a try? It's an opportunity to meet and socialise with other people who share your problems.

DO YOU CARE

FOR SOMEONE WHO CANNOT MANAGE ON THEIR OWN BECAUSE OF ILLNESS OR FRAILITY, OR WHO IS SUFFERING FROM PHYSICAL OR MENTAL DISABILITY OR FROM SUBSTANCE ABUSE?

You may have seen the box above on posters and leaflets around the surgery. We're using it as part of a renewed campaign to identify everyone registered with Heaton Road who is either a carer or receives care from someone else. We're sure that there are lots more of you out there who **do** provide care but don't think of yourselves as carers – you are just doing what is expected from a family member, friend or neighbour. We want to know about you, so that we can be sure that you are aware of the wide range of support that can be provided to you and the person you care for. No-one will interfere – it's entirely up to you whether you take advantage of what's on offer, but it makes good sense to discover what's available. You can find out more by picking up the leaflet showing the yellow 'Do You Care' box from Reception or in the surgery waiting room. It includes a registration form to let us know you are a carer – please complete and return the form so that we know about you, even if you don't want any support.

HEATON ROAD HEALTH TIP No. 9

Skimp on your sugar intake! You don't need to cut out sugar entirely – that would be next door to impossible – but the tips below could make a real difference.

- Don't give your family high-sugar cereals – not only will their teeth benefit, but they'll be less likely to develop a sweet tooth for life. A survey by Which? In 2012 revealed that the worst offender was Frosties (containing 37% sugar), closely followed by Coco-Pops and Sugar Puffs. Shop own-brand versions had similar sugar levels.
- Cut back on sauces – pasta, tomato and – especially – sweet and sour sauces are all high in sugar, as is mayonnaise. A single tablespoonful of shop-bought coleslaw may contain a full teaspoonful of sugar.
- Check low-fat foods carefully. A typical 5oz (142g) serving of zero-fat yogurt may contain as much as five teaspoonfuls (20g) of sugar – not far short of half the recommended daily intake for a woman.
- Try to avoid altogether foods containing the sweetener High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS, also known as maize syrup, glucose syrup, isoglucose or glucose-fructose). Despite the natural-sounding name, it's a highly-processed cheap alternative to cane sugar. Recent studies suggest that it may be more harmful than other sugars, and may possibly be addictive. Widely used in the USA but less common in the UK, it seems sensible to avoid it until we know more about its potentially harmful effects.