

INVESTIGATION

THE SUGAR DIARIES

Research reported in the *BDJ* in January (*BDJ* 2014; 216: 5) suggests that individual intake of 'free sugars' should be less than 5% of calories – around five teaspoons a day – to minimise the risk of dental cavities throughout life.¹ Free sugars are those that are added to food as well as those naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit concentrates.

Previously, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had recommended that intake of free sugars should be less than 10% of total calorie intake.

Although fully aware of my sweet tooth and my tendency to look for something sweet to round off a meal – even if that is 'only a yoghurt' – I don't consider myself to have a diet high in sugar. I don't take sugar in tea or coffee, don't drink fizzy drinks, and try to use a straw when I drink fruit juice. Admittedly, I do have a number of fillings, but these days (after a decade in dental publishing), I am scrupulous about keeping my mouth clean and my dentist is happy to see me just once a year.

However, I wondered just how much sugar I consume in an average week, and if it is anywhere near the five teaspoon threshold. So, I decided to keep a food diary for one week, and then used a handy website (myfitnesspal.com) to tot up the approximate sugar quantities. By way of comparison, and for moral support, my colleague Lucy offered to do the same.

In the following sugar diaries, I have only included the food and drinks that contained sugar rather than everything we consumed. One teaspoon of sugar is 4 g so five teaspoons a day is 20 g.

1. Moynihan P J, Kelly S A. Effect on caries of restricting sugars intake: systematic review to inform WHO guidelines. *J Dent Res* 2014; 93: 8-18.

Look out for further sugar features in future issues.

BY KATE QUINLAN

KATE QUINLAN

Monday

Jordans Country Crisp cereal with Flame Raisins and added raspberries **33 g sugar**
Satsuma **5 g sugar**
Home-made sandwich **2 g sugar**
Cadbury's Creme Egg **26 g sugar**
Slice of homemade cake **30g sugar**
Glass red wine **2g sugar**
Day total = 65 g sugar = 16 teaspoons

Shrove Tuesday

Toast with Nutella **9 g sugar**
Natural yoghurt with raspberry layer **5 g sugar**
One biscuit **7 g sugar**
One small apple **15 g sugar**
Homemade drop scones with various sweet toppings **40 g sugar**
Glass red wine **2 g sugar**
Day total = 78 g = 19.5 teaspoons

Wednesday

Homemade drop scones with lemon curd **5 g sugar**
Mini Cheddars **1.2 g sugar**
Black Cherry Activia yoghurt **12 g sugar**
Three chocolates **5 g sugar**
Orange Club biscuit **12 g sugar** (after giving blood!)
Raspberry ripple ice cream **20 g sugar**
Glass red wine **2 g sugar**
Day total = 57.2 g = 14.3 teaspoons

Thursday

Homemade drop scones with Nutella **9 g sugar**
Jordans Country Crisp cereal with Flame Raisins **32 g sugar**
Vanilla Activia yoghurt **12 g sugar**
Banana **12 g sugar**
Raisins **15 g sugar**
Caramelised onions (in tart) **10 g sugar**
Glass red wine **2 g sugar**
Day total = 92 g = 23 teaspoons

Friday

Special K with Red Berries **9 g sugar**
Banana **12 g sugar**
Strawberry Activia yoghurt **12 g sugar**
Slice of chocolate birthday cake **26.8 g sugar**
Raspberry ripple ice cream **20 g sugar**
Glass red wine **2 g sugar**
Day total = 81.8 g = 20.4 teaspoons

Saturday

Yoghurt with blackberries **15 g sugar**
Homemade cake **10 g sugar**
Caramelised onions (in tart) **10 g sugar**
Day total = 35 g = 8.7 teaspoons

Sunday

Home-made cake **10 g sugar**
Mini Magnum **12 g sugar**
Roast vegetables **8 g sugar**
Red wine **6 g sugar**
Day total = 36 g = 9 teaspoons

DAILY AVERAGE = 15.8 teaspoons – over three times the maximum amount of daily sugars suggested in the research.

Verdict: It looks like I should cut down on cake, ice cream, yoghurt – and probably red wine – to reduce my risk of future dental cavities.



LUCY HEANEY

Monday

Five teaspoons added to drinks **20 g sugar**
Berries added to porridge **21.4 g sugar**
Caramelised cashews and peanuts **11 g sugar**
Baked beans **10.3 g sugar**
White bread **1.5 g sugar**
Chocolate honeycomb bites **17 g sugar**
500 ml Coke **53 g sugar**
Day total = 146 g sugar = 36.5 teaspoons

Shrove Tuesday

Four teaspoons added to drinks **16 g sugar**
Apple chips added to porridge **13.9 g sugar**
Hoisin chicken **7.6 g sugar**
Sour cream **6 g sugar**
Hot chocolate **24.1 g sugar**
Tiffin biscuit cake **48.5 g sugar**
Pancakes with maple syrup **12 g sugar**
500 ml Coke **53 g sugar**
Day total = 181 g sugar = 45 teaspoons

Wednesday

Two teaspoons added to drinks **8 g sugar**
Apple chips added to porridge **13.9 g sugar**
Thai chicken soup **20 g sugar**
Houmous and salad wrap **4.4 g sugar**
Banana **12 g sugar**
Fillet-o-fish **5 g sugar**
Day total = 68.3 g sugar = 17 teaspoons

Thursday

Two teaspoons added to drinks **8 g sugar**
Berries added to porridge **21.4 g sugar**
Lemon cheesecake **26.6 g sugar**
Prawn and chili dip snack **11.9 g sugar**
Tesco Finest Fish pie **6.8 g sugar**
Profiterole dessert **20 g sugar**
Day total = 99.9 g sugar = 24.9 teaspoons

Friday

Pret a Manger bacon and egg roll **3.3 g sugar**
Three teaspoons added to drinks **12 g sugar**
Chicken burger with mango and lime **6 g sugar**
Graze snacks **51.6 g sugar**
Day total = 72.9 g sugar = 18.2 teaspoons

Saturday

Four teaspoons added to drinks **16 g sugar**
White bread **5.1 g sugar**
Marinated prawns with chili dip **11.9 g sugar**
Lemon trifle **4 g sugar**
Pomegranate juice **13 g sugar**
Day total = 58.3 g sugar = 14.5 teaspoons

Sunday

Three teaspoons added to drinks **12 g sugar**
White bread, brown sauce (with eggs) **15 g sugar**
Tesco large sushi snack pack **9 g sugar**
Activia yoghurt **7.9 g sugar**
Day total = 43.9 g sugar = 10.9 teaspoons

DAILY AVERAGE = 23.8 teaspoons – over 4.5 times the maximum amount of daily sugars suggested in the research.

Verdict: Lucy has a bit of an addiction to sugary drinks, and cutting down on these would reduce her intake dramatically and also reduce her risk for future dental cavities.

