

## ALTERNATIVE SUGARS

# Dates



## Susie Sanderson elected as FDI Speaker



Susie Sanderson OBE has been elected as the Speaker of the FDI General Assembly. She will bring a wealth of experience to the post, including 40 years as a clinical dentist and her longstanding experience of national and international dental politics.

Dr Sanderson has been the British Dental Association (BDA) delegate to international dental meetings for over ten years, forming working relationships with many dental associations around the world. She is also the BDA's President-Elect and will take up the role of President in May 2018.

Dr Sanderson is also well-known to her FDI dental colleagues and has been a BDA delegate to the World Dental Congress since 2004.

The General Assembly is the supreme legislative and governing body of the FDI, which brings together the worldwide dental profession to provide one voice for dentistry in addressing the international challenge of improving global oral health.

Mick Armstrong, Chair of the BDA's Principal Executive Committee (PEC), said: 'We are so proud of Susie, who is immensely qualified for this role. She is respected nationally and internationally for her leadership on many issues of the day, including antimicrobial resistance, amalgam, and professional regulation.'



Elaine Gardner, British Dietetic Association (BDA) Spokesperson, discusses the sugar content in dates and other dried fruits, and related oral health advice.

**Name:** Dates (and other dried fruits)

**What is it?** Fruit that has been dried to remove water and so concentrates the sugars already present in the fruit. Fruits such as raisins, dates, prunes and apricots are dried in the sun or in heated wind tunnel dryers.

Many fruits such as cranberries, blueberries, mango and pineapple are infused with a sucrose syrup or apple juice and then heated or dried, which further increases their sugar content.

**Found in?** Available in most shops and supermarkets. The fruit retains much of its original flavour and is widely used by the confectionery, baking, and sweets industries. As ingredients, dried fruits and their juices, purées and pastes impart sweetness and texture and are also often used in home baking.

The raw food trend has seen an increase in the number of products such as cereal bars that contain high proportions of dried fruits. For example, products in the Nakd range can contain 49% dates, and 17% raisins with nuts and flavourings.

**Effect on general health** Dried fruits are a good source of iron and fibre in the diet. The glycaemic index (GI) of traditional dried fruit is low to moderate (29-62) and the insulin response is proportional to their GI. However, as the sugar content of fruit (mainly fructose) is concentrated when the fruit is dried, they do contain, weight for weight, more sugar than fresh (64 g sugar per 100 g raisins). The key is portion size – a portion of dried fruit is around 30 g (one tablespoon of raisins, three dried apricots). It

is, however, easy to overeat dried fruit and so the sugar and calories can add up.

Sulphur dioxide is used in some dried fruits, such as dried apricots, to protect their colour and flavour. Sulphur dioxide, while harmless to healthy individuals, can induce asthma when ingested by sensitive people.

**Oral health impact** Dried fruit contains large amounts of fermentable carbohydrate (mainly glucose and fructose) which is detrimental to oral health. The current recommendation from NHS England is to consume dried fruit with a meal and never as a snack due to its 'sticky' nature. This has been challenged in a review by Sadler<sup>1</sup> which suggests that the evidence base is weak and there are positive attributes for dental health, such as the need to chew dried fruits which encourages salivary flow, and the presence of anti-microbial compounds. It must be noted that the review was funded by the California Prune Board.

**Advice for patients** A good product but should be eaten in moderation. While more work is establishing the extent of the effects of eating dried fruit on teeth, dried fruits and products containing them are best enjoyed as part of a meal, not as a between-meal snack. Oral hygiene needs to be maintained.

1. Sadler M J. Dried fruit and dental health. *Int J Food Sci Nutr* 2016; **67**: 944–959.



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Coming up: Honey