

Daily Union Article  
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Title: Sugar Shock From Food

Most of us have heard of the phrase “sticker shock” – which Merriam-Webster defines as *“astonishment and dismay experienced on being informed of a product’s unexpectedly high price.”*

Let me introduce a similar phrase “sugar shock” – which I would define as my astonishment and dismay when I read the label on a food that I thought was healthy only to find that it has unexpectedly high levels of ingredients I don’t need!

There are many methods foods are marketed in a way that leads consumers (that means you and me) to believe a food is at least somewhat healthy. You may think that using a syrup that says “no fat” or “fat free” would be a safe healthy alternative to one that makes no such claim. Okay – so this line of thinking was a trap. I knew before even typing this news article that just because something says it is fat-free does not automatically make it a great healthy alternative.

Here’s an example: The nutrition label for a popular chocolate syrup states it is fat free but neglects to tell you that it has 10 grams of sugar per serving. It’s not that we don’t need sugar in our bodies, but we don’t need that much sugar!

The only type of sugar required for good health is called glucose. This sugar is the main food our brain needs for proper functioning and is needed throughout the body to fuel our system. However, our body doesn’t need any sugar added through our diet to get the glucose our brain and body need. Our body can make the glucose it needs by breaking down food molecules like carbohydrates, fats, and proteins.

Sugar naturally occurs in many of the foods we already consume; fruits, vegetables, and dairy products to name a few. These foods provide us with the sugar we need while also contributing the many other nutrients we need that they have to offer. Most fruits are high in Vitamin C and many vegetables are high in Vitamin A. They also contain important nutrients that help our immune system, keep our water balance, and contribute to healthy cells and organs. Milk gives us protein needed for muscle health, builds and repairs tissue in our body, and serves as the building block for bones, cartilage, blood, and skin.

Sometimes all these good nutrients can be off-set by an extreme level of sugar, sodium, or fat. For example, oranges are an excellent source of Vitamin C (aka ascorbic acid), low in sodium, and contain .1 grams of fat. An orange also contains 174 mg of potassium. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that can help ward off the development of health concerns such as cancer, heart disease, and arthritis. Potassium is a mineral needed for the proper functions of the cells, tissues, and organs in our bodies.

Now take that healthy orange and turn it in to orange juice or orange-flavored fruit drink and compare their nutritional value:

**A Whole Orange:**

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>		
Serving Size 1 orange (131g)		
Servings Per Container 1		
Amount Per Serving		
<b>Calories 60</b>		
%Daily Value*		
<b>Total Fat</b>	0g	0 %
Saturated Fat	0g	0 %
<i>Trans</i> Fat	0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0mg	0 %
<b>Sodium</b>	0mg	0 %
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	15g	5 %
Dietary Fiber	3g	13 %
Sugars	12g	
<b>Protein</b>	1g	
Vitamin A	6%	• Vitamin C 120%
Calcium	6%	• Iron 0%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.		

**Orange Juice with Calcium:**

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>		
Serving Size 8 FL OZ (249g)		
Servings Per Container 8		
Amount Per Serving		
<b>Calories 110</b>		
%Daily Value*		
<b>Total Fat</b>	0g	0 %
Saturated Fat	0g	0 %
<i>Trans</i> Fat	0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0mg	0 %
<b>Sodium</b>	0mg	0 %
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	26g	9 %
Dietary Fiber	0g	0 %
Sugars	22g	
<b>Protein</b>	2g	
Vitamin A	0%	• Vitamin C 180%
Calcium	35%	• Iron 0%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.		

### Fruit Flavored Drink:

Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size 8 FL OZ (248g)		
Servings Per Container 8		
Amount Per Serving		
<b>Calories</b>	120	
%Daily Value*		
<b>Total Fat</b>	0g	0 %
Saturated Fat	0g	0 %
<i>Trans</i> Fat	0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b>	0mg	0 %
<b>Sodium</b>	55mg	2 %
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b>	30g	10 %
Dietary Fiber	0g	0 %
Sugars	29g	
<b>Protein</b>	0g	
Vitamin A	0%	• Vitamin C 120%
Calcium	0%	• Iron 2%
* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.		

As you can see, the sugar amounts vary greatly between the three. While you are still getting many nutritional benefits from the orange juice, you are getting a lot more sugar and have cut out all the Vitamin A. With the fruit drink, you aren't getting much nutritional value at all, comparatively.

As you look at other food labels the National Institute of Health offers these tips to cut added sugars from your diet:

- Choose water, fat-free milk, or unsweetened tea or coffee instead of sodas, sports drinks, energy drinks, and fruit drinks.
- Reduce sugar in recipes. If a recipe says 1 cup, use 2/3 cup.
- To enhance flavor, add vanilla, cinnamon, or nutmeg.
- Eat fresh, canned, frozen, and dried fruits without added sugar. Choose fruits canned in their own juice rather than syrup.
- Use fruits to top foods like cereal and pancakes rather than sugars, syrups, or other sweet toppings.
- Read the ingredients list to pick food with little or no added sugar.
- Use the Nutrition Facts label to choose packaged foods with less total sugar.

Being aware of your body's nutritional needs is an important part of living a healthier lifestyle. Sharpening your skills in reading food labels is a great first step to becoming more aware of what you are consuming and how that contributes to your health and well-being. For more information on reading food labels and making healthy food choices, call me at the Geary County K-State Research and Extension office at 785-238-4161. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!