Tasty Candy Ideas for Those Watching Their Sugar Intake by Patricia Ryan

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According to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American children eat too much sugar. Although their intake has decreased in recent years, they remain far above dietary guidelines. On average, kids get around 16 percent of their calories from sugar. Most nutritionists recommend limiting consumption to 10 percent of daily caloric intake.

Who is to blame?

Certainly not their parents! American parents have made a concerted effort to reduce the amount of sugar in their kidsâ€™ diets. But it isnâ€™t easy. Food companies add sugar to just about everything these days. Whether regular table sugar, corn syrup, or the high fructose variety, they can have a harmful effect on the body if consumed in copious quantities.

Why is it bad for us?

Most of us know someone who has a â€œsweet tooth.â€• Perhaps he devours candy bars, ice cream cones, or smoothies on a daily basis. Have you ever wondered why? Believe it or not, most experts now believe that sugar is addictive. It is also largely responsible for the obesity epidemic in America.

Three out of five Americans are overweight or obese. Even more alarmingly, the rate of childhood obesity has more than trebled in the past thirty years. The condition has several immediate and long-term effects on a childâ€™s health and well-being. First and most critically, obesity is closely linked with a potentially fatal and chronic conditionâ€”type 2 diabetes. What is it?

People who are born with diabetes must inject insulin on a regular basis because their bodies do not produce it as they should. The condition is called type 1 diabetes and it is quite rare. People with the increasingly common type 2 variety, however, develop the disease when their cells fail to use insulin properly. More often than not, their cells become insulin resistant, often because of increased sugar intake. The potentially addictive substance also causes cavities.

Yes, your dentist was right! Eating too many sweets may harm your teeth. The bacteria that cling together and become plaque use sugar as an energy source. In other words, the more sugary foods you consume, the more likely you are to get cavities. It is no wonder that kids are more susceptible to them than adults, since they eat more sugar.

This isnâ€™t a diatribe against sweets, or even against sugar. Our diets would be fairly bland without the substance. However, all things should be enjoyed in moderation; and there is too much sugar in the modern American diet. One easy and effective way to reduce our intake is to eat foods that contain artificial sweeteners. These substances have come a long way since the 1980s. Most modern sweeteners are all but indistinguishable from the real thing.

Make the switch

Thereâ€™s only so much a parent can do to control the amount of sugar her kids consume. After all, children eat at least one meal outside of the home each weekday, maybe more. Most donâ€™t pay much attention to their sugar intake. They are far more likely to drink sugary drinks than their parents are, for obvious reasons. This includes sports drinks, fruit drinks, and sodas, of course. There isnâ€™t much that mom or dad can do about that. They can stock the fridge with sugar-free colas, but vending machines arenâ€™t hard to find outside of the home. Candy is another story.

As you might imagine, kids eat a lot more candy than adults do. On Halloween alone, the average trick-or-treater collects several pounds of it. To save the neighborhood kids from cavities, some adults have switched to sugar-free snacks. There is rarely any tradeoff for this substitution. How is this possible? As we mentioned, artificial sweeteners taste exactly like sugar. The only difference is that they do not have nearly as many calories and they do not promote plaque buildup.

Where to find them?

Sugar-free candies are a relatively new addition to the world of sweets. They are sold at most supermarkets and convenience stores, but often in limited quantities or varieties. Because they require slightly more expensive ingredients, they can be a bit pricey. One easy way to save on sugar-free treats is to purchase them in bulk quantities on the internet.

On a recent visit to a popular online candy store, we browsed an impressive catalogue of sugar-free candies, including sugar-free gummy bears, chocolate covered raisons, malt balls, gumballs, and chocolate covered peanuts. Some of these sellers also offer shipping discounts on larger orders.

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Patricia Ryan is a freelance writer who writes about shopping and food products including a sugar free candy.

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