Be a Sugar Detective

**Sugar shock**

The average American eats about 22 teaspoons of added sugar every day. This adds up to over 70 pounds of sugar a year. Even worse, American teens are eating closer to 34 teaspoons a day. The result on our bodies is less than sweet. Eating too much sugar can lead to unhealthy weight gain, high blood pressure, diabetes, and high cholesterol. Plus, eating lots of sugar makes you less likely to get all the vitamins and minerals you need in your diet.

**How much is too much?**

The American Heart Association has made the following recommendations about sugar limits:

Children = Limit to 3-4 teaspoons per day

*Adult women/teens= Limit to 5 teaspoons per day*

[](http://sugarstacks.com/)*Adult men/teens= Limit to 8-9 teaspoons per day*

**Just how much sugar is in soda?**

12-ounce can = 10 teaspoons of sugar

20-ounce bottle = 16 1/4 teaspoons of sugar

2-liter bottle = 27 teaspoons of sugar

**Don't believe the hype!**

****Sports drink ads make it look like athletes should drink them by the gallon. The reality is sports drinks are high in calories and sugar. Water, and not sports drinks, should be the main source of hydration for children after sports. When sports drinks are used, pay attention to how many servings are in the bottle. Sports drinks are available in 64 oz bottles. That’s 8 servings!

**What about 100% juice?**

Large amounts of 100% fruit juice can lead to excessive weight gain in children. They can cause diarrhea and tooth decay. Eating fruit is much healthier than drinking juice. Children do not need to drink juice. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

* Infants under 6 months of age should not be given juice
* Children 1 to 6 years old should have no more than 4 to 6 oz (one-half to three-quarters of a cup) of juice per day
* Children 7 to 18 years old should have no more than 8 to 12 oz (1 to 2 cups) of juice per day.

**What are healthy drinks for children?**

Children should be encouraged to drink water. Putting it in a fun cup or thermos and adding a slice of fruit can make it more appealing. Flavored seltzer is a healthy alternative to soda. Low-fat milk is a good source of calcium.

**Spy on sugar**Complete the [Sugar Detective Spy Sheet](http://yalehealth.yale.edu/node/2636/attachment) and investigate the sugar content in your family’s food. When you know the facts, you can make better choices.