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# How to Have a Sweet Holiday ...with Less Sugar

By Keri Glassman, R.D.

All year long, you may try to limit sugary foods and emphasize healthier choices, but the holiday season brings many temptations. Delicious cakes are baking in the oven, cookies are arriving from distant friends and relatives, and the kids are bringing home special treats from school. So, how do you let your children enjoy the holiday sweets without going completely overboard?

It's about balance, moderation and some healthy alternatives! Consider some of these simple tips to make this holiday season healthy for your children (and you).

- **Not every event needs to be about food!** Holiday activities for your children can involve arts and crafts or a family outing to a local holiday concert.
- **Be smart when it comes to sweets.** If you know your kids have a holiday party at school the next day, the night before may not be the time to bake cookies together. Instead, watch a festive movie or write holiday cards.
- **Prepare healthier sweet treats together.** Kids like to eat what they make. You may be surprised at how much they like the cookies made with applesauce, if they have been involved with the baking.
- **Try organic or unprocessed sugars,** because they can contain minerals not found in sugar (like molasses) or may digest more slowly than sugar (like brown rice syrup). Some options, such as maple sugar, may affect taste; so consider if the sweetener's flavor is appropriate for the food you are

making. Also, look into the alterations that need to be made to the recipe. Example: In the case of honey, use  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup for each cup of sugar and lower liquids by  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup. As with regular sugar, use in moderation.

- **Reduce sugar and fat in recipes:**

- Cut sugar by  $\frac{1}{3}$  to  $\frac{1}{4}$  in a recipe and increase the use of cinnamon, nutmeg, vanilla and other sweet-tasting spices and natural flavorings.
- Replace fat with applesauce or baby-food prunes for chocolate brownies, cakes or cookies. Use  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup unsweetened applesauce for 1 cup oil. Or, substitute  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup prune puree and  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup unsweetened applesauce for 1 cup of oil.
- Skip the frosting; use fresh fruit or no-added-sugar fruit spreads. ✱

The recommended sugar intake is less than 10% of total daily calories. How does this measure out for kids?

For example, a normal weight six year old boy should consume roughly 1,-1,800 calories. Less than 10% of calorie intake would mean 45g of sugar or less per day. But, most children consume at least two times the recommended amount of sugar. The primary sources? Soda, candy and baked goods. A 12 oz. can of soda contains ten teaspoons of sugar (41g)—the same amount found in three apples! In addition, soda doesn't provide any vitamins, minerals, fiber or protein; whereas nutrient-dense foods like fruits and yogurt provide kids with the energy and nutrients necessary for development.

## Sweet Substitutions

Instead of	Try
sugar cookies	gingerbread cookies
chocolate cake with frosting	angel food cake with berries
ice cream sundaes	lowfat vanilla ice cream with fruit
traditional hot cocoa	hot cocoa made with skim milk or soymilk
donuts	oat bran muffins made with applesauce
chocolate chip cookies	oatmeal raisin cookies made with applesauce

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