

A Day without Sugar

Activities Guide

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Taking the [DAY WITHOUT SUGAR CHALLENGE](#) is a great start towards developing healthy eating habits. It's also a good opportunity to start a conversation in your organization, classroom or family about the role sugar and sweets play in our lives. And a healthy way for children to challenge their siblings and friends to compete by observing a [DAY WITHOUT SUGAR](#).

Though sugar is an important energy source for the human body, too much sugar can increase the risk of obesity, diabetes and heart disease. Unfortunately, most people in the United States today consume too much sugar.

The American Heart Association recommends no more than 9 teaspoons of sugar per day, but the average adult consumes more than 20 teaspoons, and children typically consume closer to 30 teaspoons per day. Just one 12-ounce can of soda typically has 9–10 teaspoons of sugar.

What follows is a list of fun activities that educators and parents can use to teach kids about sugar and its presence in everyday foods and drinks.



Get Sugar Smart

IDEAS FOR GROUP ACTIVITIES & LESSONS ABOUT SUGAR

Sugars In Our Favorite Snacks

OBJECTIVE:

Initiate a conversation about sugar consumption by providing a fun, visual representation of the surprising amount of sugar in popular sweets and drinks.

AGE RANGE:

Elementary and Middle School

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

large bag of sugar

teaspoon measurement

clear plastic cups or tubes

DESCRIPTION:

- 1 Record popular sweets and snacks from participating children. Alternatively, provide your own list of popular items.
- 2 Ask the children to rank or sequence the items from what they think are the most sugary to the least sugary, either on their own or working in small groups. Ask children to create a data chart to represent their findings.
- 3 One at a time or in small groups, invite children to test their predictions by reviewing nutrition facts in front of the group. This will require the facilitator to access nutrition labels or information online about the amount of sugar in each recorded item. Many labels are available online, and www.sugarstacks.com has information about many popular food items. Contextualize the amount of sugar by explaining that every 4 grams of sugar is equal to one full teaspoon.
- 4 For each item, scoop the proper number of teaspoons from a bag of sugar into a clear cup or tube. The amount of sugar is often a surprising visual!
- 5 After finishing the visual demonstration and comparing predictions to actual amounts, initiate a conversation about the activity. Did the participants realize that when they drink just one soda they are consuming 10 teaspoons of sugar? What parts of the activity did they find surprising? What are some favorite alternatives to sugary foods?
- 6 Ask students to write a paragraph about the importance of limiting sugar intake.



Helping Samuel & Susana Sweet-Tooth

OBJECTIVE:

Start conversations between children about healthy alternatives to sugary foods.

AGE RANGE:

Elementary School

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

**note cards
writing utensils**

DESCRIPTION:

- 1 Place children in pairs or small groups and hand each group a note card you have created that outlines a full day's worth of food on a high-sugar diet for Samuel or Susana Sweet-Tooth, two fictional characters.
- 2 Ask one student to play the role of Samuel or Susana while the others listen to each meal and work together to provide suggestions for healthier alternative foods. Ask them to write down their recommendations.
- 3 Ask children to switch roles. Provide new note cards and invite children to present their alternatives to the class at the end of the activity.

Sugar Hunt: Finding the Hidden Sugars

OBJECTIVE:

Educate children about sugars present in everyday foods that might surprise them.

AGE RANGE:

Elementary and Middle School

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

photos, names or samples of popular food and beverage items

DESCRIPTION:

- 1 Compile either photos, names or samples of a handful of popular food and beverage items that are not necessarily high in sugar, but contain at least some sugar. A sample list might include: ketchup, flavored milk, granola bars, salad dressing, tomato sauce and yogurt.
- 2 Either alone or in small groups, ask children to select which items have sugar and which do not.
- 3 Reveal the results, recording the amount of sugar per serving for each item. Children will likely be surprised to learn how many familiar foods contain added sugars.
- 4 Host a conversation about these "sugar surprises." Reassure children that they don't necessarily need to avoid all the foods you discussed, but it's important to recognize that sugar is present in those foods. With "sugar surprises" all around us in everyday foods, we don't need more sugary drinks and snacks!



Sugar Relay Race

OBJECTIVE:

Teach children about the amount of sugar in popular snacks and beverages while hosting an exciting race.

AGE RANGE:

Elementary and Middle School

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

bowl

multiple nutrition labels from popular sugary snacks

1 large bag of sugar

3 or 4 teaspoons

DESCRIPTION:

- 1 Outside, place children in teams of 3–4 and have the teams line up alongside one another. For each team, place an empty bowl roughly 10 yards away.
- 2 Supply each team with a teaspoon, a bag of sugar and a bowl containing a set amount of folded nutrition labels.
- 3 To begin the race, ask the first member of each team to select a nutrition label from his/her bowl and quickly locate the amount of sugar in the product. That team member must then take the corresponding number of teaspoons of sugar from the bag and run to the empty bowl to deposit the sugar.
- 4 The team member's turn is up once the person in front of him/her has deposited the proper amount of sugar in the bowl. The winning team is the first team to measure the sugar in all of the nutrition labels. For younger children unable to convert grams to teaspoons, simply tell them the number of teaspoons to use by noting the amount on the nutrition label.
- 5 Start a conversation about the amount of sugar in popular snacks and beverages and the importance of exercise. Explain that exercise and play can "burn off" the negative effects of sugar and discuss strategies for ensuring the proper amount of exercise each day.



The Kitchen Challenge

OBJECTIVE:

Encourage children to partner with an adult or caregiver to find kitchen items that have sugars in them and help children learn how to read nutrition labels.

AGE RANGE:

Elementary and Middle school

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

a nutrition label

worksheets with 5 lines (for children to fill-in food items)

DESCRIPTION:

- 1 It can be tough to know which foods have hidden sugars. This activity will help children learn about nutrition labels and the different names of hidden sugars.
- 2 Provide children with a partial list of names for different sugars and sweeteners. A great website with names of different sugars and sweeteners can be found here:
www.commonensehealth.com/Diet-and-Nutrition/List_of_Sugar_Names_and_Sugar_Facts.shtml
- 3 Review the different sections that are listed on a nutrition label. Teach children where they can find the names of sugars on the nutrition label.
- 4 For homework, ask children to go home and challenge their parents to find five food items that have sugars in them that they would not consider a sugary snack or beverage. Make sure they know they will need to examine nutrition labels.
- 5 Ask children to fill in the worksheet with the name of the item, the amount of sugar and the sugar name used. Have children share their hidden sugar findings with the class.

To learn more about the DAY WITHOUT SUGAR CHALLENGE visit:

www.latinoteca.com/day-without-sugar

