



Does sugar feed cancer?

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Is it true that sugar "feeds" cancer and because of that I should avoid all sugar in my diet?

Recent studies suggest that a diet high in simple sugars (such as refined sugar, sodas and sweets) may increase the risk of developing certain types of cancer. While this association has been noted, we are still not sure of the cause. It may be that a diet high in simple sugars has less cancer-fighting nutrients. It may be that simple sugar causes a surge in insulin that increases the growth of cancer cells.

Despite the lack of research, a number of books and web sites prematurely advise people with cancer to eliminate all sugar as part of a cancer prevention diet. However, it would be unhealthy to avoid all food sources of simple sugars since this would include fruits, vegetables and grains. These foods are the prime source of nutrients that have been shown to reduce cancer risk.

The way to prevent surges in insulin is by reducing your intake of foods that are very high in simple sugar. This can be done by avoiding foods such as sweets and sodas, or by combining simple sugars with foods that have fiber, protein and fat. Combining simple sugars with these foods will slow their absorption and avoid a surge in insulin. Talk to a registered dietitian for more information about better food choices to help reduce added sugars in your diet.

The Tracey Birnhak Nutritional Counseling Program at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania

[sugar and cancer](#)

No

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