

The Hidden Dangers of High Fructose Corn Syrup

Overview

High fructose corn syrup is a sweetener that is used in many sodas and processed foods. Government subsidies of corn have made it cheap for food manufacturers to use the refined corn-based sweetener, and as a result it is found in everything from canned fruit to ketchup. A study conducted by GA Bray at Louisiana State University found that high-fructose corn syrup, or HFCS, represents more than 40 percent of all sweeteners used in foods and beverages. Supermarket guru Phil Lempert states, however, that 81 percent of consumers are concerned about HFCS. Demand for alternatives has led companies such as Heinz and Kellogg's to offer products made with real sugar instead of HFCS.

High-Fructose Corn Syrup

High fructose corn syrup, or HFCS, is a highly refined product. Manufacturers separate corn starch from other parts of the kernel, leaving behind a liquid. Enzymes are added and this turns part of the sugars in the liquid from glucose into fructose. The resulting mixture is high-fructose corn syrup.

Obesity

High fructose corn syrup may be a factor in the obesity epidemic. Although the Corn Refiners Association and American Medical Association state that all sugar has equal calories and high-fructose corn syrup is no worse than any other form of sweetener, a study from Princeton University suggests otherwise. The study, led by Bart Hoebel, found that rats given access to HFCS gained more weight than rats given table sugar.

Diabetes

The rate of Type 2 diabetes has increased at the same time that the use and consumption of corn syrup in processed carbohydrates has also increased. A 2004 study led by L.S. Gross at the Inter-Medic Medical Group reviewed the role of dietary habits along with the prevalence of Type 2 diabetes and discovered that diet is related to diabetes. The diabetes rate went up as people consumed more corn syrup and carbohydrates, and it decreased with more fiber consumption.

Allergies

High fructose corn syrup is dangerous if you have corn allergies. Although corn allergy is not as common as an allergy to milk or soy, it does exist, and symptoms are similar. Corn allergies can cause hives, headaches and stomachaches. High fructose corn syrup is in many products and avoiding it entirely is necessary if you have a corn allergy.

Addictive Properties

Sugar and related sweeteners, including HFCS, may be addictive. A study led by Magalie Lenoir at University Bordeaux in France indicated that the addictive potential in sweeteners can exceed that of cocaine. Rats fed with a sweetened solution were compelled to consume more. You may find it difficult to break your desire for something sweet if you frequently consume high fructose corn syrup and other sweeteners.