

The Dangers of High Fructose Corn Syrup

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Monday, 09 July 2012 15:32 - Last Updated Wednesday, 11 July 2012 11:03



High fructose corn syrup is causing disease and draining our brains. Avoid a potential sticky situation and eliminate high fructose corn syrup from the products that you are eating. It might just save your life.

If someone told you that what you were feeding your family is killing them, you would probably revamp the pantry and restock the fridge. If your kids were diagnosed with diabetes or your spouse suffered from heart disease, then you'd more than likely read every label to ensure that what they were ingesting wasn't causing them harm. The only problem is that before you become aware of what the disease-causing culprit is, it's too late. High fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is in nearly everything that we eat and for a country that continues to grow around the midsections, it would seem like eliminating HFCS from our food would be the right thing to do, considering it is the link between heart disease and diabetes. However, HFCS isn't going anywhere, and it's in our hands to educate ourselves and others of how damaging HFCS is.

According to Lucia Schnitzer, owner of Luci's Healthy Marketplace in Phoenix, the average American downs about 35 pounds of HFCS every year. A few years ago, the corn industry came out with a commercial saying that HFCS was good for you, but Schnitzer stands firm saying that this is far from the truth. HFCS is sugar that comes from corn, and while that may sound healthy because corn is a natural, raw vegetable, it's the way that they process the corn to get the sugar that causes corn syrup to be bad for you.

Despite being a leader in obesity, diabetes and heart disease, HFCS can drain your brain, too. UCLA did a study on rats and found that HFCS was frying synapses in the brain which are the chemical connections in brain cells that aid in memory and learning. They proved this by training the rats to go through a maze, and then gave fructose water to the rats. After only a six-week diet of the fructose water, the rats had an extremely difficult time remembering how to make it through the maze even though they had been trained to go through the maze and did so successfully six weeks earlier.

The scariest part is that HFCS has infiltrated its way into nearly every food that we ingest. Many people are aware that it's in candies and sodas, but it's also in our breads, juices, ketchups, instant stuffings, gravys, oatmeals and breakfast bars. The only way to ensure that you aren't eating your 35 pounds worth of the stuff is to buy organic and read the labels. Even labels that say "natural" can contain the ingredient, so it's important to scan through the ingredient labels. "Anything that says organic, you're safe. You're going to pay a little bit more, but it's better to pay more now than later for diabetes," Schnitzer said.

Schnitzer suggests turbinado sugar and sucant as two alternatives to HFCS. Both of these contain fewer calories and provide many nutrients including iron and calcium. Stevia, agaves and coconut crystals are another way to sweeten food naturally while getting health benefits. It may seem like a hassle to have to check the ingredient labels for these replacement products but making the change and educating yourself and your family can save lives, literally. Avoid buying products that contain this dangerous ingredient and see your health reap the benefits. After all, you are what you eat.