



Understanding sugar

Natural sugars vs. added sugars

There are two basic types of sugar that can appear in your baby's diet: sugar that comes from nature and added sugar. A baby's body can't tell the difference between them, and both kinds of sugars are digested and broken down the same way.

Natural sugars can be found in nutritious foods in your baby's diet, like fruits, and also in foods you may not think of as "sweet": breastmilk, milk and milk products, and vegetables. Added sugars, such as brown or white table sugars, syrups, honey, corn syrup and other sweeteners, can be added to foods in your baby's diet for taste and sometimes to play a role in functions, such as helping foods brown and adding texture.

What's wrong with added sugars?

The problem with too many added sugars in foods in your baby's diet is that they usually are found in foods with little other nutrition. Plus, foods that have added sugars, such as soft drinks, cakes, cookies and other sweet desserts, can push more nutritious foods out of your baby's diet. Fruit is a great way to give your

baby something sweet each day in his diet. Soft, diced fruit or fruit purees are better than sweet desserts since they offer nutrients along with a naturally sweet taste. And don't forget, too many sugary foods are not healthy for your baby's teeth!

Check the nutrition facts

To check how much total sugar is in your baby's food, look for "Sugars" listed on the Nutrition Facts label on packaged foods, under "Total Sugar,"—which represents all the sugar in the product, natural and added. On a separate line you'll see the added sugar on its own.

Read the ingredients

You can also look for added sugars in your baby's foods by reading the ingredients list. Added sugar goes by many names, including corn syrup, fructose, rice syrup, dextrose, sugar or sucrose, molasses, honey, cane syrup and others. Ingredients are listed in order from the highest to the lowest amounts, so if you see these or other added sugars at the top of the list that means the product has a large amount of added sugar.