

## High Fructose Corn Syrup

If you are not familiar with High Fructose Corn Syrup, then you must not be a label reader. Unless you are a “health nut,” or are just extremely conscious of what you put in your body, chances are your pantry and refrigerator are filled with items that contain HFCS. Don’t believe me? Go check out the labels.

High fructose corn syrup is a sweetener and preservative used in most processed foods, such as cookies, crackers, and bread. If you think it is only in dry foods, think again. Salad dressings, juices, even many brands of yogurt contain the sweetener. High fructose corn syrup is made by changing the sugar in cornstarch to fructose, another form of sugar. The amount we Americans consume of this ingredient is staggering. Some estimates are that we eat 63 pounds of high fructose corn syrup each year, and most of us do not even realize it! Even products labeled as “low fat” can contain HFCS, so you really have to read labels carefully. One day I was standing in the bread aisle at the grocery store, determined to find some bread that did not contain HFCS. One of the bread vendors was stocking bread on the shelves and after awhile he turned to me and asked what I was looking for. I told him about my quest. He leaned toward me and in a low voice said “I think it is in everything.” Now I was beginning to feel there was a conspiracy.!

Perhaps thinking it is a conspiracy is a bit strong, but we should all remember how our brain handles the signals it gets when we consume foods containing fructose. Our brain actually does not get the signal that we are full—in fact, our brain usually thinks we are still hungry and had better keep eating. That explains why it is not difficult to consume an entire box of our favorite cookies or a big bag of our favorite chips.

Scientists are studying HFCS effects on humans, and even though many studies are still inconclusive, I am going to go out on a limb here and say that in the not too distant future, we will see a big link between this ingredient and adverse health effects such as diabetes, high cholesterol and a myriad of other concerns.

Here are some suggestions for getting rid of or at least limiting your consumption of High Fructose Corn Syrup:

- Get into the habit of reading all labels until you become familiar with which brands and items contain no HFCS.
- Buy only 100% fruit juice and avoid fruit-flavored juices, since they almost always contain extra sugar.
- Increase the amount of whole fruits and vegetables you consume, as these fill you up more than juice does.
- Frequent the Organic section of your grocery store—the products may cost a bit more, but their ingredients are more likely wholesome rather than chemicals and preservatives.
- Go through your pantry and refrigerator and make a note of what has HFCS in it. The next time you are shopping, try to find products without HFCS.

- Even if you cannot completely eliminate HFCS from your diet, strive to at least limit it.