

Here's Some Good News...



Some Sugars Are Actually Good for You!

When most people think of sugar they think of white crystals, cotton candy, candy bars, cakes and soda pop. Most of the foods we associate with sugar contain sucrose, a disaccharide (or combination of two sugars) containing glucose and fructose. Commonly called table sugar, sucrose is a refined sugar made from sugar cane or sugar beet.

Although glucose, one of the sugars in sucrose, is essential to energy production, an excess of refined sugar in our diets is contributing to a multitude of health problems, including obesity, diabetes, tooth decay and heart disease. But that doesn't mean that all sugars are completely bad. There are healthy sugars, too, which can be found in fruits, vegetables, mushrooms, breast milk and dairy products. Besides glucose (or blood sugar), seven other sugars have been identified that appear to be essential for human health.

These sugars have been called glyconutrients by some researchers. Glyconutrients consist of one or more sugar molecules. A sugar with one sugar molecule is a monosaccharide, one with two is a disaccharide and those containing three or more sugars are called polysaccharides.

Polysaccharides have been shown to have some interesting health benefits. They are involved in cell to cell communication, cell growth and repair, detoxification, immune functions and nerve functions. These polysaccharides include substances like mucilage, gums, arabinogalactans, oligosaccharides, beta glucans and glucosamine and they are found in many whole foods and medicinal herbs. To understand why these sugars are important, we need to understand a little bit about cellular structure.

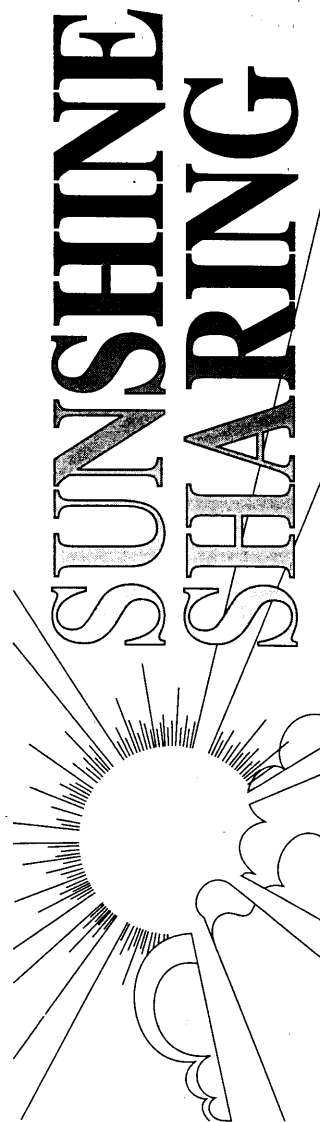
Cell membranes are composed of two layers of phospholipids with embedded proteins. The eight essential sugars attach to these embedded proteins to form glycoproteins which coat the surface of every cell. These glycoproteins help cells recognize each other, which is how the immune system recognizes a cell that is part of the body from a foreign cell that has invaded the system and needs to be destroyed.

This helps explain why certain herbs, like medicinal mushrooms, which are rich in polysaccharides, have been found to assist the immune system in fighting infections and cancer. These complex polysaccharides can also be helpful in autoimmune disorders, where the immune system is attacking the body directly.

But this is not the only function of these sugars. All cells need to know what is happening in the rest of the body. The glycolipids (sugars attached to fats) and glycoproteins (sugars attached to proteins) found in the cell membranes stick out like little antenna. They help various chemical messengers to deliver messages from one cell to another. These messages help control energy production, stimulate cell growth and repair, and even affect our mood.

Unfortunately, because so many people are eating vast quantities of refined sugar, and not consuming adequate amounts of complex carbohydrates like fruits and vegetables, the chemical messaging system of the body is out of order. This leads to chronic health problem like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, mood disorders, immune dysfunction (infections, parasites, allergies, asthma and autoimmune disorders), memory problems and intestinal problems. Fortunately, there are tools available to help us curb our addiction to refined sugar and start getting the essential sugars the body really needs.

Learn more inside...



Your guide to better health the natural way.

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