LDL Program: Sugar & Processed Foods

Diets high in sugar and processed foods tend to have a negative impact on LDL cholesterol and other chronic diseases. Sugar and processed foods provide calories without added nutrients, allow the liver to synthesize more LDL “bad” cholesterol, lower HDL “good” cholesterol, raise triglycerides, and inhibit the enzyme that breaks triglycerides down. Additionally, these foods increase blood sugar, insulin resistance, and fat storage. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend limiting calories from added sugar to less than 10% of total calories per day. The American Heart Association is more restrictive and recommends limiting added sugars to 150 calories per day for men, which equates to 37.5 g or 9 tsp sugar per day. For women, they recommend 100 calories per day, which equates to 25 g or 6 tsp sugar per day. Most Americans consume too much sugar with an average of 77 g per day, according to the American Heart Association. Excess sugar consumption has been linked to obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, certain cancers, tooth decay, and nonalcoholic fatty liver disease.

Natural vs. Added Sugars

- Natural sugars- occur naturally in foods like fruits and vegetables
  - These foods contain water, fiber, and beneficial micronutrients
  - Incorporate more of these foods into your diet
- Added sugars- do not occur naturally in food, as they are processed and added
  - Foods with added sugars typically don’t contain much water, fiber, or beneficial micronutrients
  - Examples: candy, soft drinks, baked goods
  - Limit these foods in your diet

Tips to Decrease Added Sugars

- Limit soft drinks, fruit juices with added sugar, candy, sweets, baked goods, and low-fat or diet foods
- Drink water instead of sugar-sweetened beverages
  - Avoid adding sugar to coffee or tea
- Utilize spices, extracts, vanilla, ginger, or lemon instead of sugar
- Avoid highly processed foods
- Review nutrition labels for ingredients and the amount of added sugars

Activity: Fill in the Blank

Use the information above to fill in the blank with the correct word or phrase!

1. Diets high in sugar and processed foods tend to have a negative impact on ___________________ and other ___________________.
2. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend limiting calories from added sugar to less than ____% of total calories per day.
3. The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugars to _____calories per day for men, and _____calories per day for women.
4. Excess sugar consumption has been linked to obesity, ________________, heart disease, ________________, tooth decay, and ___________________.
5. ___________ sugars occur naturally in foods like fruits and vegetables. These foods contain water, fiber, and beneficial micronutrients, and should be incorporated into your diet.
6. ___________ sugars do not occur naturally in foods. They are processed and added to foods like candy, soft drinks, and baked goods.

Scan this QR code to complete the post-activity survey and redeem your points for your participation in the Take Charge program!
Answer Key:

1. LDL cholesterol, chronic diseases
2. 10
3. 150, 100
4. Type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, nonalcoholic fatty liver disease
5. Natural
6. Added