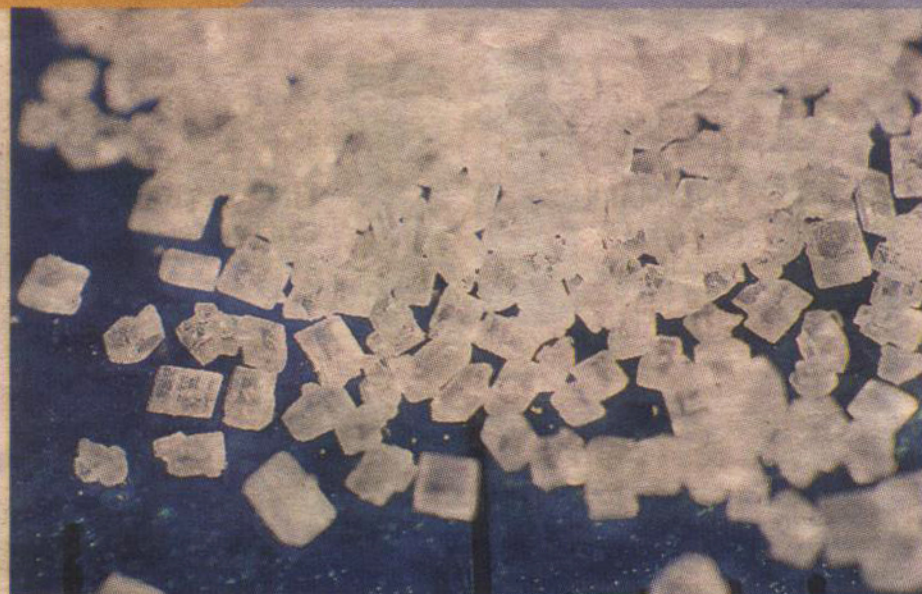
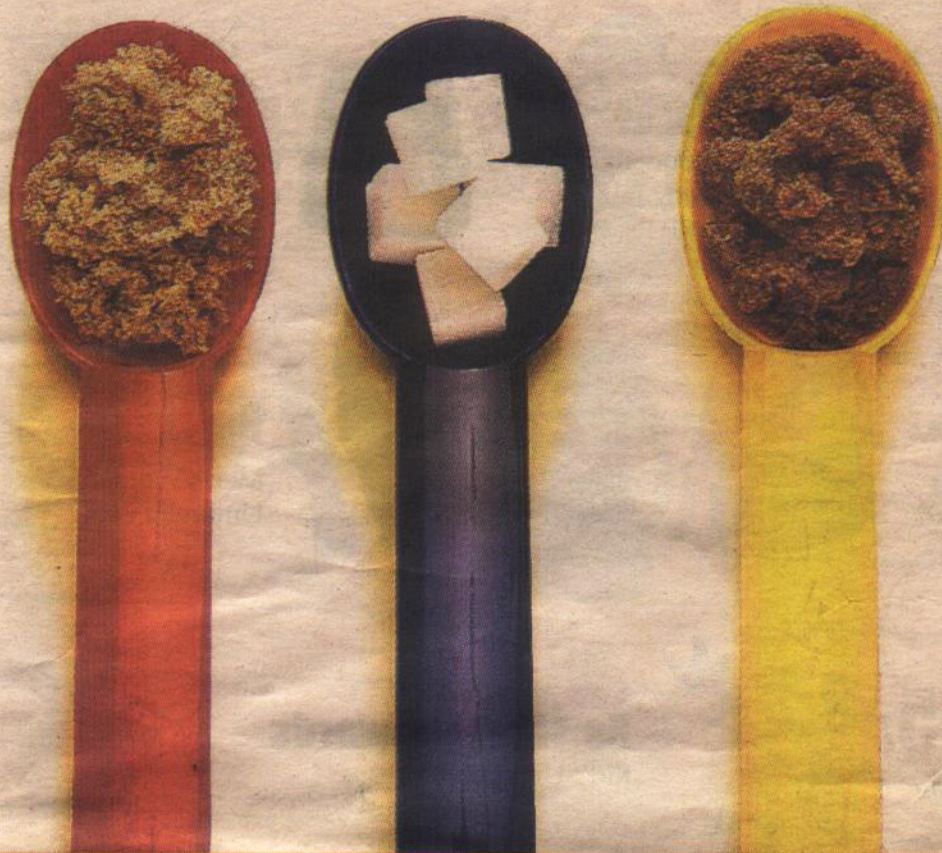


body & soul

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MCDONALD'S MEAL TOYS RECALLED

McDonald's has recalled millions of Shrek drinking glasses after tests showed that low levels of cadmium, a heavy metal identified as a carcinogen, could come off on the hands of a person holding the glasses. Cadmium is used in some paints to make bright colours, but industry representatives said that it was unusual for paints containing cadmium to be used in consumer products like glassware. Long-term exposure to cadmium has been associated with a variety of health problems, including kidney and bone ailments.



NUMBER CRUNCHING

Calories in 1 tablespoon of:

White, refined sugar: 45

Honey: 65

Jaggery: 45

Unrefined brown sugar: 48

Artificial sweetener: 0

MAKING THE SWITCH

If you are looking at switching white, refined sugar with other options in your everyday diet, you can use brown, unrefined sugar or jaggery to replace it in beverages like tea and coffee and even sweet, baked things. You may occasionally use an artificial sweetener if you are a heavy tea/coffee drinker, but it's best not to make it a habit.

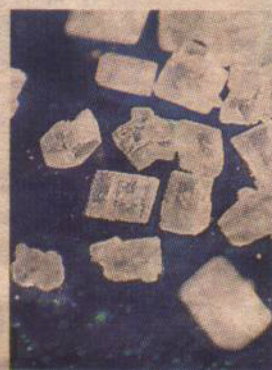
Hold the sugar rush

Nutrition begins at home

Eating as a family and involving your children in cooking food might make them healthy grown-ups

>> P 10

Are there healthier alternatives to refined, white sugar?



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Plain old white sugar seems to be the biggest nutrition villain everyone's fighting these days, even more so if you are on the farther side of 30, trying to lose weight, have diabetes or just trying to lead a healthier lifestyle. Nutritionists advise against eating too much of simple, refined sugar as it causes a sudden spike and a sharp dip in blood sugar levels. "Refined white sugar also has no micronutrients whatsoever and just packs in empty calories," says Dr Sunita Dube, nutritionist, Aryan Hospitals, Navi Mumbai.

So what are other sweetening options that you can switch to instead of refined sugar? We got two nutrition experts to choose a few healthier alternatives.

Jaggery

While thinking of sweetening agents, it helps to remember that the more unrefined and natural or

less processed a sweetener is, the healthier it will be. Jaggery is an unrefined and less processed form of cane sugar. "It contains several minerals, is especially iron-rich and is absorbed slowly into the bloodstream, keeping you satiated for longer," says dietician Jyoti Lalwani. She recommends using it in place of regular sugar in breakfast porridges and cereals. A jaggery-based nuts *chikki* is a healthy snack for children, she adds.

Unrefined brown sugar

This is simply refined sugar at an earlier stage of processing, which means it may retain some micronutrients in it, though not as much as jaggery. You can replace most food-stuffs that use refined, white sugar with it. "Buy natural, unrefined brown sugar. A lot of brands in the market are just white refined sugar with added caramel to it to give it that brown colour," warns Dube.

Artificial sweeteners

People who are overweight or are

suffering from diabetes should opt for artificial sweeteners, which have no calories. A normal weight person who doesn't consume too much sugar everyday doesn't have to switch to artificial sweeteners. "They are either made of a sugar called sucralose or saccharine. It's better to opt for sweeteners that are sucralose-based, which are just a modified form of sucrose," says Lalwani.

A word of caution though. "Don't binge on desserts made with artificial sweeteners because you think they have no calories. A *sheera* made with an artificial sweetener will still have lots of *ghee*," adds Lalwani.

Honey

Though calorie-packed (65 calories per tablespoon), natural honey without preservatives is still a healthier option than refined sugar because it's a natural product. "It is full of anti-oxidants and rich in vitamin B12. Just make sure you get natural, unprocessed honey though," says Dube.