

## Children's Food Demands: Do You Have to Give In?

**By Colleen Huber, [Naturopathyworks.com](http://Naturopathyworks.com)**

If you're a health-conscious parent, which choice should you make at a child's birthday party?

1. Forbid your child to have cake and ice cream
2. Avoid taking your child to any birthday parties
3. Take healthy food to the party for your child
4. Take enough healthy food for everyone
5. Let your child eat what everybody else is eating

Growing up in a family where sugar was not eaten, I actually have strong opinions on this matter. My father was the strict disciplinarian who never allowed any sugar, and either kept us away from other kids' birthday parties in order to avoid the aggravation, or let us go, but made us sit out the cake and ice cream festivities. My mother, on the other hand, pitied us deprived children and urged that we be allowed to have some treats, if only for social mingling.

Relatives fretted that we would not turn out normal. Friends stuck by us, but worried that other friends would reject us for being "health nuts." Our teachers didn't know what to make of us. One of the first books I read in first grade even claimed that ice cream was a healthy food, and it seemed that my peers considered it to be one of the basic food groups, all of which certainly steamed my father.

### **What was a small child to believe?**

Actually, as long as I can remember, I have always been grateful that my father's view prevailed over (or drowned out) all others, and that I have avoided any sugar cravings, sugar illness or withdrawal to this day.

It may seem odd to read a term such as sugar illness, but I suspect the reason I have never had headaches, PMS, depression, hypertension or weight gain--despite eating like a horse my whole life--has everything to do with not having sugar in my diet. Marrying late, my husband and I conceived our first child on our first attempt. I was 41 at the time. Is it a coincidence that I have never had sugar in my diet? Both sugar consumption and infertility are at all-time highs and worsening in recent decades.

### **Sugar: The Fuel for Disease**

But sugar illness goes far beyond the above symptoms. Diabetes and obesity are epidemics in this country, and quickly increasing around the world. They, as well as cancer, feed directly on sugar. Cancer's fuel for growth is sugar.<sup>1,2</sup> Hypertension due to arterial smooth muscle overgrowth and atherosclerosis have been tied in numerous studies to insulin in the bloodstream.

Uffe Ravnskov, MD, an award-winning medical researcher many times over, has shown through his study of the Masai people of Tanzania that they have the cleanest arteries in the world on their traditional diet of only meat, blood and milk (no sugar, no insulin). However, Masai who migrate to cities with more westernized cuisine with refined carbs both in and out of Africa develop Western-type cardiovascular diseases.<sup>3,4</sup>

In fact, insulin, rather than sugar itself, may be the most serious problem. Studies of centenarians show almost nothing in common. Some smoke, but some don't. Some are active, and some aren't. Some are serene, yet some are excitable. However, what they did have in common was low blood sugar and low insulin.<sup>5,6</sup>

Now that I am a parent myself, I desperately want to pass on all the health advantages I have had over the years. My first inclination then is aggression against anyone offering candy and

the like. However, as a parent, I also try to find or create situations within social events in which my 3-year-old does not have to feel unpleasantly isolated. So my choice on the multiple-choice question above is the fourth option: To provide enough alternative food for everybody at the party.

First, when I call to accept the invitation, I let the mom or dad know that we don't eat any sugar at all. If they don't understand, I describe the problem as an allergy, which given all the pathology, it is.

### **The Alternatives**

Then, I offer to bring whole fruit, nuts, carrot, cucumber and celery sticks, cheese, watermelon-only popsicles, etc. for everyone. (Watermelon-only popsicles are the easiest recipe I know. Just stuff small chunks of watermelon fairly tightly into popsicle molds. Freeze for a whole fruit, unsweetened summer treat. Peaches and plums also work.)

While the cake is being cut, I distract my child with any interesting baby, pet or object handy. After the cake has been distributed, we get plates of whole food for ourselves and mingle freely. Older children, of course, are less appreciative of their parents' presence at a party but, by then, they are old enough to be challenged with choosing only whole food for themselves, just as we expect them to refuse cigarettes.

Also, after having been taught through their early childhood how their healthy, whole food diet can peacefully co-exist with their friends' different food choices, the older child and teenager can have the grace to maintain their friendships. This I know from personal experience.

But there is another advantage these days that I could not enjoy as a teenager. Now that "low-carb" diets have become widely

accepted, the whole food teen can stay popular with others just by being fashionable.

If your children demand poor-quality foods, it's because they have previously found their way into their school or your house, or they have been advertised persuasively to them. If you demand more healthy whole food at your children's school, you won't be alone. More than two-thirds of Arizona parents recently surveyed favored eliminating junk food machines from their children's schools.<sup>7</sup>

This was even after they were reminded in the survey that such machines were a source of income for cash-strapped schools. Private schools are not so strapped as to sell out their students' health, however. Waldorf schools often advertise an organic whole-food menu for children.

### **In Goes the Good Foods, Out Goes the Bad**

If the food in your house is part of the problem, start shopping just the periphery of the supermarket where the whole foods are. Skip the aisles of processed and sweetened foods and drinks. Leaving bad food behind at the supermarket makes a whole food/sugar-free diet a whole lot easier. Whatever you do, don't bring cookies and ice cream home to your kitchen, where they will sit a few feet away from you like ticking bombs and quickly find their way into everybody's tummies.

After all, you are only human. Don't make your temptations any more difficult than they already are by bringing them into your house. Start the clean sweep of your pantry during a summer break or long weekend, so that neither you nor your children will be tempted by junk outside the home within those first critical 48 hours.

When the cravings become bothersome, massage both ears to cover the ear acupuncture points related to addiction. Broccoli,

cheese and liver are foods high in chromium, which are important specifically for sugar cravings. Drinking water is the best way to flush out toxins and metabolites more quickly.

When you create a whole food household for the first time, your children may balk, but within a few days, they will learn to accept the food that you are providing them and let you know that they are feeling better.

You may be surprised at how well they can rise to the challenge. Children diagnosed with depression, when advised that if they stop eating sugar their depression will go away, usually rise to this challenge and heal themselves naturally without drugs. Grant your children this learning experience, and let them grow to be as grateful to you as I am to my wise father.

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**Dr. Mercola's Comments:**

**As a clinician one of the most challenging tasks I face is offering simple practical guidelines that allow a parent to implement the diet recommendations that I know will turn their child's health around.**

**I am very grateful for future naturopathic doctor Colleen Huber's contribution that provides a marvelous tool for parent's to implement the suggestion. As a mother who understands health and nutrition, she has a very good platform to make recommendations that really work.**

### **References**

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