VOL 6. ISSUE 4 | DISPATCHED FROM BALTIMORE, MARYLAND | APRIL 2025

BRANCATI CENTER BULLETIN

Baltimore

DEAR NEIGHBORS,

In this issue of the Bulletin, we explore Nutrition Basics with a focus on sugar. You'll find tips for healthy eating on a budget and ways to tell allergies from respiratory illness.

-The Brancati Center Team

HOT TOPICS

Is it allergies or cold?

The arrival of spring for many of us also means the arrival of allergy season. It is common to feel symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, sore throat and a stuffy nose with allergies. Sometimes it can be confusing to figure out if you have a respiratory infection or allergies. Here are some key differences to be aware of:

- Allergies may cause itchy, watery eyes, which do not normally happen with a cold or flu.
- Allergy symptoms usually last as long as you are exposed to the allergen (e.g., pollen), which can be 6 weeks long during peak seasons like spring and summer. Respiratory infections rarely last more than 2 weeks.

NUTRITION BASICS: SUGARS AND SWEETENERS

What is it?
Sugar is a type of carbohydrate that is a quick source of energy. Sucrose (table sugar), fructose, glucose, and maltose are common natural sugars.

Where is it found?
Sugar occurs naturally in fruits, vegetables, and dairy, but is also added to many foods like candy, soda, cake, bread, ketchup, and juice. Check nutrition labels for total and added sugars—many foods contain more than you'd expect.

Nutrition Facts
4 servings per container
Serving size 1 1/2 cup (208g)

Amount Per Serving	
Calories	**240**
	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 4g	**5%**
Saturated Fat 1.5g	**8%**
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 5mg	**2%**
Sodium 430mg	**19%**
Total Carbohydrate 46g	**17%**
Dietary Fiber 7g	**25%**
Total Sugars 4g	
Includes 2g Added Sugars	**4%**
Protein 11g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 6mg	35%
Potassium 240mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Can I have too much sugar?
Too much added sugar can cause energy spikes followed by crashes and increased cravings. Over time, it may lead to weight gain, type 2 diabetes, and high cholesterol.

American Heart Association recommended daily added sugar intake:
Women: less than 24 grams (6 teaspoons) per day
Men: less than 36 grams (9 teaspoons) per day

Website: www.brancaticenter.org
Email: brancaticenter@jhmi.edu
Facebook: BrancatiCenter
Twitter: @BrancatiCenter

The Johns Hopkins Brancati Center is based in Baltimore, Maryland

Nutrition Basics: Sugars and Sweeteners continued. . .

Which sugars should I eat?

Although too much sugar can cause health problems, you do not need to remove sugar completely from your diet. Natural sugars, like those found in fruit, are a good choice because they are surrounded by fiber, vitamins, and antioxidants. Added sugars, however, should be minimized as they are easily overeaten and don't have any nutritional benefits.

Should I eat sugar substitutes?

There are three main types of sugar substitutes: artificial sweeteners, sugar alcohols, and novel sweeteners. All three have little to no calories, so they may help with weight loss and maintaining stable blood sugar levels. These sweeteners are generally recognized as safe by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Some research, however, shows that excess intake of artificial chemical sweeteners (aspartame, sucralose) can lead to increased sugar cravings. It still may be worthwhile to try these, then speak with a physician if they do increase your sugar cravings.

	Artificial Sweeteners	Sugar Alcohols	Novel Sweeteners
Facts	• Lab-made • Much ***sweeter*** than sugar and other sugar substitutes • Can ***alter*** gut bacteria	• Natural or lab-made • May cause ***bloating, gas, and diarrhea***	• Made from natural sources • May taste more ***like regular sugar***
Examples	• Aspartame • Saccharin • Sucralose • Acesulfame potassium	• Erythritol • Sorbitol • Xylitol • Isomalt	• Stevia • Monk fruit • Allulose

For more information click on the links below:

Johns Hopkins Sweeteners and Johns Hopkins (sugar and artificial sweeteners)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (reducing sugar from drinks

Spotlight:

Healthy Eating on a Budget

With rising food prices, eating healthy can feel tough. Here are some tips to help you eat well on a budget:

1. Meal Planning – Plan your meals for the week, including snacks. Consider what you already have and how much time you'll have to cook.

You don't have to cook everything—just decide what you'll eat and when. For example, plan to have breakfast at home and grab lunch out. Writing it down helps you stay on track and align with your health goals.

2. Mix It Up – Use a mix of fresh, frozen, and shelf-stable foods. Frozen fruits and veggies are often cheaper but just as healthy. Look for canned goods with no added salt or sugar. Budget-friendly protein options include canned tuna, beans, lentils, and frozen meats.

3. Make a Grocery List – A list helps you stick to your meal plan and avoid impulse buys. Try not to shop while hungry!

4. Rethink Your Drink – Swap sugary drinks for plain water to save money and cut calories. Carry a reusable water bottle to avoid buying bottled water.

5. Use the Shop Simple with MyPlate App – Find healthy, budget-friendly meal ideas here: Shop Simple with MyPlate