

Root Vegetables Differ In Sugar Content

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Are root vegetables, such as turnips, high in sugar content?

Actually, root vegetables vary in the amount of sugar they carry. But first, let's review what we mean by "sugars" and go from there.

Sugars are carbohydrates. Other carbohydrates include starch, which breaks down into sugars as it's digested, and fiber, which passes through the body unscathed (and unabsorbed). Major types of sugar include glucose, fructose, sucrose and lactose. No matter what sort of sugar or starch you consume, it breaks down into glucose as it's digested so your body can use it. Glucose and fructose mainly come from fruits and vegetables, sucrose mainly comes from beet or cane sugar, and lactose comes from milk.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Standard Nutrient Database doesn't include a separate listing for sugars. Instead, it lists "Total Carbohydrates," which includes sugars, starches and fiber. It also includes a "Total Fiber" category, so you can generally get a sense of total sugar and starch content by subtracting the amount of fiber for any given

food from the Total Carbohydrate listed.

However, since you're interested just in sugar content, a 1987 USDA reference work, "Sugar Content of Selected Foods," shows the following data:

- Raw turnips contain 4 grams of sugar.
- Raw beets contain 6 grams.
- Raw carrots contain 7 grams.
- Raw parsnips contain 5 grams.
- Baked potatoes contain 2 grams.
- Baked sweet potatoes contain 11 grams.

Be forewarned, though: Looking at sugar content without also looking at starches can be misleading. Starches break down very easily into sugars once they're consumed. Until the last decade or so, nutritionists didn't realize that.

They thought that sweets like table sugar would cause a spike in blood glucose, whereas complex carbohydrates, like the starch in potatoes, wouldn't. Now they know starches break down quickly and act much like sugary foods once they're in your system.

Family Living Focus

by
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Healthy Active Kids

When you hear the term "healthy active kids," what do you think of?

If you have a preschooler in your house you already know what constitutes an active child. Preschoolers have an inexhaustible supply of energy and like to move, play, run, climb, jump, and spin.

Just think how tired you are after following them around all day. The average toddler walks about two miles each day!

However, the high activity level of children begins to decrease with age as children become more tuned into television, computers, video games or experience failure at organized sports.

As a teen-ager, I can remember wanting to spend time run-

ning to get into shape to play field hockey.

We lived on a farm and my mother thought that it was a bit silly to just run up and down the road. She strongly suggested that I take the push mower and "run around the yard."

Past generations were often very physically active just by the nature of the times. They surely were not near the conveniences that we experience today.

Many families today do not garden or even care for their own lawns (or, if they do, they have a riding mower). They don't clean their own houses, or walk to school or church. Instead most people use drive-through car washes, prescription centers, photo developing centers, fast food restaurants, and remote controls.

Even if your family is involved in agriculture production, the advances in equipment and facilities have reduced the amount of physical exercise that farmers receive.

Children in the U.S. today are no exceptions. They are less fit than they were a generation ago.

Not surprisingly, inactive children, when compared with active children, weigh more, and have higher blood pressure and lower levels of heart protective high-density lipoproteins.

The National Children and Youth Fitness Study indicates that at least half of all youth don't engage in physical activity that promotes long term health benefits. Children spend an average of 17 hours a week watching T.V. in addition to the time they spend on video and computer games.

Our 11-year-old son assures my husband and me that he is the only child in the fifth grade who doesn't have a Nintendo or Game Boy.

With spring just around the corner, encourage your children to get out and get active. Outdoor play provides children the opportunity to be carefree. Unstructured physical play is a well accepted stress reducer for children. Outdoor play enhances physical development such as balance, strength, and cardiovascular endurance, but it is just as nourishing to skills such as perception, navigation, and cooperation.

As parents, you can be a positive role model to children in the area of physical activity. Look for practical ways to be more physically active and let your children be part of your transformation.

Emphasize fitness being fun, not associated with winning or hard work. Participate with your child as often as possible. Your attitude toward movement will make a difference and will help to make your child healthier!

Why not try some of these simple activities to get your children moving: On a breezy day (not high winds) give each child a plastic grocery bag. Throw the bag up in the air.

The grocery bags move slowly through the air to allow children to catch them fairly easily. This activity reinforces the importance of keeping their eye on an object they are trying to catch and can involve lots of running if the breeze is just right. (Be sure young children do not place the bags on their heads and put the bags in the trash when they are done playing). Stuff plastic grocery bags with crumpled newspaper and close with rubber bands. Children can toss the "balls" to each other, throw them up and catch them or make lots of "balls" and have a snowball fight where the snowballs don't hurt. Take sidewalk chalk and make a large Tic,Tac,Toe board on the cement. Children can jump from square to square, jump forwards and backwards, jump on one foot, hop around the outside squares, and similar activities.

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