

HEALTH NEWS AND FEATURES

High Fructose Corn Syrup



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Think you know what you're eating? Are you reading the labels?

Scientists know that high fructose corn syrup makes it impossible for persons with diabetes to satisfactorily control their blood sugar. This is a huge problem. But, have you seen the new commercial on TV, to make you think HFCS is fine to consume? Don't be fooled.

Diabetes leads to blindness, heart attacks, amputations, strokes and many other preventable problems, as well as early death.

What is high-fructose corn syrup? It is not the same thing as the natural, healthy fructose in honey and fruit. "High-fructose corn syrup" is a highly refined, artificial product. It is created through a complicated chemical process that transforms cornstarch into a thick, clear liquid. White sugar and "high-fructose corn syrup" are not the same. "High-fructose corn syrup" is worse than sugar.

This chemicalized fructose is sweeter than sugar in

an unhealthy way, and is digested differently in a bad way. Research has shown that "high-fructose corn syrup" goes directly to the liver, releasing enzymes that instruct the body to store more fat! This elevates triglyceride (fat in the blood) levels and elevates total cholesterol levels. New research indicates that HFCS fools the body by turning off the body's sense of feeling full, when eating products containing it. Therefore, persons tend to eat more than they would. Tests also indicate that chromium levels are lowered by this chemical and contribute to the advance of type 2 diabetes.

The dangers of white sugar have been known for a long time. But now the evidence is clear that "high-fructose corn syrup" is even more dangerous for those of us with the sweet tooth, by increasing sweet cravings.

"High-fructose corn syrup" is not the corn syrup you buy in a bottle at the supermarket to use for baking. It's an artificial additive that's cheaper and easier for manufacturers of sodas and fruit juices to use. If you read labels, you'll find this additive in such products as pizzas, sweetened yogurt, baby food, ketchup, cookies, beer and frighteningly in most manufactured foods. In foods we don't think of as sweet. It is in foods with sugar, and in foods with other artificial sweeteners.

If the artificial additive "high-fructose corn syrup" is

added to an otherwise healthy food, is the overall product still healthy? If you add a fragment of poison to vitamins, are they still good for you? After all, just a small quantity of poison probably won't kill you on the spot, but the cumulative amounts will. 10 years, 15 years of the collective affects of "high-fructose corn syrup" is evident in the health problems we have today.

Manufacturers of food products began substituting "high-fructose corn syrup" for white sugar in the 1970's. Look back at your life, and the lives of your family and friends. Look at the differences in your health status, and of people you know. Heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, liver problems, digestive problems.

I believe there is something for us to learn by looking back at our eating and cooking habits, comparing them to the present, and then looking at the state of our health today. The increased use of "high-fructose corn syrup" from the 1970's to now, coincides with the obesity, the out of control diabetes and the rate of cancer that affects us today. The continued consumption of this artificial sweetener will be our downfall, if we don't take control of what we purchase and what we eat.

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Studies Find Dramatic Increase in Suicides among Adolescent African-American Males

ATLANTA - A significant increase in mental illness and behavioral problems among adolescent African-American males demonstrates the need for new approaches to treatment and better understanding of the complex challenges facing these youths, according to a policy paper issued by Community Voices: Healthcare for the Underserved, an advocacy group based at Morehouse School of Medicine.

The paper, titled "The Secret Epidemic: Exploring the Mental Health Crisis Affecting Adolescent African-American Males," outlines data indicating that mental health problems are rising among members of this at-risk group, their access to treatment facilities is relatively low and treatment strategies must be revamped to address the socioeconomic issues that confront them.

"Our research found that many young black males are treatable, but they are going undiagnosed because of failures in America's health-care system," said Dr. Henrie M. Treadwell, Director of Community Voices, a nonprofit seeking to improve health services and access to health care. "Our entire society feels the impact

of this failure. Suicides and homicides have increased for this group, and the residual effect is impacting communities across the country. This problem must be addressed."

Dr. Claire Xanthos, a health services research specialist, wrote the paper, which cites studies showing that black males ages 15-19 die from homicide at 46 times the rate of their white counterparts and that from 1980 to 1995, the suicide rate for black adolescents rose from 5.6 to 13 per 100,000 of the population.

Xanthos writes that "these figures should not be surprising since adolescent African-American males in contemporary American society face major challenges to their psychological development and well-being. In addition to dealing with the physical, mental and emotional issues typically experienced during adolescence, adolescent African-American males are confronted with unique social and environmental stressors. They must frequently cope with racism and its associated stressors, including family stressors, educational stressors, and urban stressors."

The paper notes that when young black youths do find treatment, depression is

often overlooked because their symptoms often differ from white youths'. For cultural and social reasons, black youths often express suicidal feelings through somatic complaints rather than sadness or depression.

Moreover, the paper calls for more "bicultural" training for young black males. Such training would better prepare them to follow proper behavior in school and the workplace, while also working with young black males to get them ready to deal with the discrimination they are likely to face. Also cited is the need for a significant increase in the number of black therapists available to work with African-American youths.

Dr. Treadwell said it is essential that new policies be implemented to address the social and environmental factors that create poor mental health outcomes for young black males.

"We must increase the capacity of America's mental health system to help resolve the problems faced by young black males," she said. "There must be more research in this area, and more people of color must be trained and hired to help this at-risk group."

Red Cross Gives Blood Donors a Chance for Relief at the Pump

ATLANTA - Summer generally brings to mind backyard barbecues and family vacations, but record-high gas prices have put a damper on summer travel plans for many families. The American Red Cross hopes its summer promotion will provide three lucky blood donors a little relief at the pump. Everyone who presents to donate blood or platelets between July 1 and September 30, 2008, can enter to win one of three \$1,000 gas cards as part of its "Save a Life and See America" promotion.

Blood shortages are common during the summer months due to a decrease in blood donations. The absence

of high school and college blood drives plays a large role in the annual drop, as does a decrease in the number of organizations sponsoring blood drives. However, hospital demand for blood often increases due to an increase in the number of traumas during the summer.

"While many of us are concerned with the strain on our wallets, countless patients in local hospitals have another concern - survival," said Mario Sedlock, director of donor services, American Red Cross Southern Blood Services Region. "The summer is a very challenging time for the blood supply. When you take an hour out of your

day to give blood, you help to ensure that blood will be available to these patients whenever and wherever it is needed."

The American Red Cross Southern Blood Services Region needs 1,200 people to donate blood each weekday to meet the needs of patients in more than 130 hospitals and healthcare facilities throughout the region. Most people who are age 17 or older and weigh at least 110 pounds are eligible to give blood every 56 days. A single blood donation can help save up to three lives. Please call 1-800-GIVE-LIFE (448-3543) or visit www.redcross-blood.org.

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