

## **Managing Sweetness**

Halloween! A scary holiday for weight conscious Americans.

Enjoyment of sweet treats dates back to the early 16<sup>th</sup> century when sugar was first available. Across cultures and geographic region, sugar is universally liked. Does sugar cause obesity?

While it's tempting to blame the obesity epidemic on sugar, scientific evidence does not support a "single culprit" theory. The fact is, obesity is caused by an excess of calories in relative to calories burned.

Biologically, humans have a natural preference for foods sweet and salty. Energy (from sugar) and sodium (from salt) are essential for our survival. Spoiled and rotten foods tend to taste bitter – a flavor that we dislike, and so avoid.

Unfortunately our modern culture no longer requires us to do much in the way of physical activity to survive. Daily living consists of riding in cars, sitting at a desk, sitting in front of the TV or sitting on the bench watching our kids play sports. Our energy equation has become unbalanced. Calories in are greater than calories out.

So back to sugar. Where does it fit in? At four calories per gram, or about 16 calories per teaspoon, it does pack a lot of energy in a small serving. Because we don't move as much as we used to, most of us need to keep sugary treats just that: a treat. Aiming for 10% or less of daily calorie requirements is a general guide suggested by the American Dietetic Association. For the average woman, that's about 150 calories per day, for a man, about 200.

Good health is dependent upon finding a balance between work and pleasure. Enjoy a walk – and a piece of chocolate.