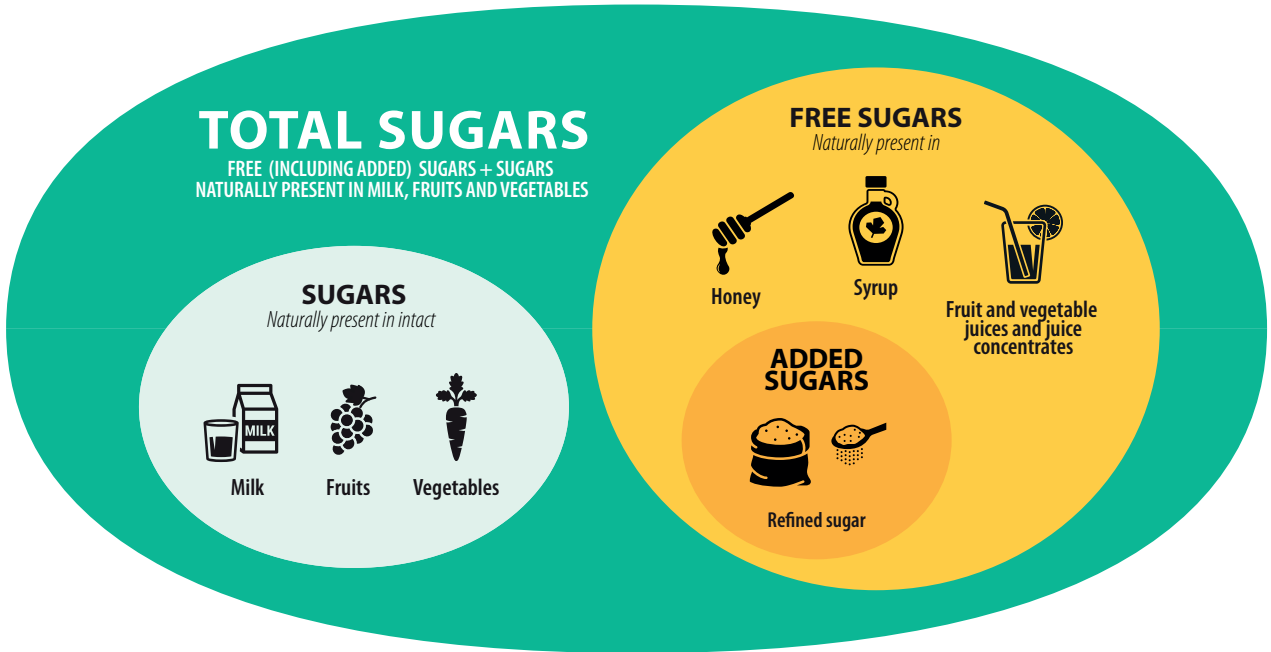


Sugar consumption and health problems

Sugars are a **source of energy**. Some types of sugar (e.g. glucose) are needed by organs such as the **heart** and **brain** to function properly. Carbohydrates in starchy foods can be used as a source of glucose by the body. Sugar consumption is known to cause **dental caries**. Also, **excess sugars** in the diet are stored in the body for example as fat for later use. If these stores are not used, they can build up over time and lead to **health problems**.

Total sugars can be divided into sub-categories



EFSA's role

YES

In the area of nutrition **EFSA** provides advice to public health authorities based on **scientific evidence**.
5 European countries **asked EFSA** to set a science-based **tolerable upper intake level** for dietary sugars from all sources.

NO

EFSA doesn't make policy recommendations or set public health guidelines.
EFSA was **not asked** to recommend how much sugar consumers should include in their diet - this is a task for **national authorities** for public health supported by **international bodies** like the World Health Organization (WHO).

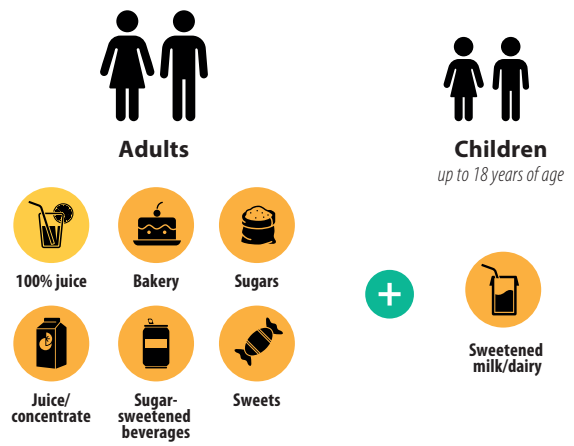
What does our opinion say

The scientific evidence **SUPPORTS RECOMMENDATIONS** in Europe to limit the intake of added and free sugars. EFSA's scientists consider it should be **AS LOW AS POSSIBLE**, in line with a nutritionally adequate diet.

It is **NOT POSSIBLE** to set a science-based Tolerable Upper Intake Level for sugars. However, EFSA's scientists confirmed the links - to varying degrees of certainty - between sugars and a range of health problems (see below).

National authorities and WHO **RECOMMEND LIMITING** consumption of added and free sugars from different foods. They can do so by establishing a target for sugars intake based on the **HIGHEST POSSIBLE** health benefit and in the context of **NATIONAL DIETS**.

Main sources of added and free sugars in the diet



Consumers of **SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGES** have intakes of added/free sugars higher than consumers of any other food group in most European countries and age groups.

Links between intake of sugars and health problems

SUGARS & THEIR SOURCES	METABOLIC DISEASES	PREGNANCY-RELATED	DENTAL CARIES
Added and free sugars	Obesity, liver disease, type 2 diabetes, high bad cholesterol, hypertension	—	Total sugars
Fructose	Cardiovascular disease, gout	—	
Sugar-sweetened beverages	Obesity, liver disease, type 2 diabetes, high bad cholesterol, cardiovascular disease, gout, hypertension	Diabetes in pregnancy Small infant	
Fruit juices and nectars	Obesity, type 2 diabetes, gout	—	
Sweets, cakes, and desserts, other sweetened beverages, including sweetened milk and milkshakes, yogurts	All could be significant contributors to the intake of added and free sugars.		

Find out more about the conclusions in our summary for consumers – [“Scientific opinion on a tolerable upper intake level for dietary sugars”](#) (available in English only)