

High fructose corn syrup by any other name would be just as sweet

By ACSH Staff — September 14, 2011

Fed up with the public's misperception that consuming high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) is unhealthy, the corn industry launched a new ad campaign last year with a catchy tag line informing people that, when it comes to HFCS or regular sugar, Your body can't tell the difference. Sugar is sugar. In addition, the Corn Refiners Association, which produced the advertisements, began lobbying the FDA to grant it permission to rebrand HFCS as simply corn sugar a move that will now be left up to the courts to decide after a group of sugar farmers filed a lawsuit contesting the name change.

Why all the [HFCS controversy](#) [1]? Because, as Adam Fox, an attorney for the sugar industry contends, It is not natural, it does not exist in nature. Sugar comes from cane and beet, HFCS requires advanced technology.

But as ACSH's Dr. Ruth Kava points out, The idea that HFCS is bad because it's not natural is simply incorrect. She adds, There is no difference between the fructose found in HFCS and that derived from fruit. And, for the record, table sugar is not natural either. You have to manipulate sugar beets and sugar canes in order to extract sucrose from them; so obtaining regular sugar requires technology as well.

Critics of HFCS also argue that it contains high levels of fructose, which can be stored in the liver and lead to other health problems. Dr. Kava explains, though, that fructose is not present in isolation in HFCS. Fructose exists in combination with glucose the same way it is found in table sugar, so I see no evidence for this argument. The real issue here, she says, is that critics want consumers to recognize that, just because it's called HFCS, it's still sugar, so people should still be aware of how much sugar they're eating in general.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom adds, Most fruits contain more fructose (thus, the name) than glucose or sucrose, but you don't see anyone campaigning to stop fruit consumption. The difference in the amount consumed is the issue, not the particular sugar.

Even Michael Jacobson, executive director of the typically alarmist Center for Science in the Public Interest, says that there's not enough evidence that HFCS is any worse for the body than sugar. Whether we call it corn sugar or HFCS, it's still the same stuff, and no one should have any problems with it, concludes Dr. Kava.

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Links

[1] <http://yourlife.usatoday.com/fitness-food/diet-nutrition/story/2011-09-13/Bitter-battle-over-high-fructose-corn-syrup-claims/50382056/1>