

Does sugar really make my child hyperactive?

Often parents complain that children get “hyper” from eating too much sugar. In the 1970’s there was a theory that sugar caused hyperactivity in children. Since that time, there has been lots of research showing that eating sugar **does not** cause behaviour changes.

If it isn’t sugar, what is it about birthday parties, Halloween and other holidays that make children misbehave? Typical childhood excitement that goes hand-in-hand with celebrations may contribute to overactive behaviour. Caffeine consumption may also add to the problem. Some children are over-stimulated by the caffeine in cola beverages, chocolate and chocolate cake. However, it does make sense to moderate your child’s sugar intake:

- Foods high in sugar may replace more nutritious foods
- Sticky, sugary foods can cause tooth decay

It is true that children can get very excited at times. Before blaming sugar, look at other causes of poor behaviour. Not enough sleep, over stimulation, hunger, too much television, lack of attention, and not enough exercise can all lead to behavioural problems.

The best advice is to make sure children participate in physical activity, get enough sleep, have regular meal times, and eat a variety of food from the four food groups in [Canada’s Food Guide](#).

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