

# NUTRIGRAM

November 2007

## DO YOU HAVE A SWEET TOOTH?

How often do you eat something sweet? Is dessert an occasional treat or something that a meal is not complete without? When you think of a snack is chocolate the first thing that comes to your mind? Do you have a sweet tooth? A sweet tooth isn't an actual dental condition but a preference for all things sweet.

### *Is it natural to prefer sweet things?*

Yes. All humans are born with a preference for things that taste sweet. It is thought that this once helped us choose nutritious foods and avoid poisonous ones. Now that almost none of us go exploring for new foods, this instinct doesn't help us out as much.

### *Are all things sweet bad for us?*

Not necessarily. Foods that are naturally sweet like fruits, some vegetables and milk can be healthy parts of your diet. Foods that have had their sweetness added to them are often the ones that we should be eating less of. Candy, for example, gives us sugar and almost no beneficial nutrients. If you are going to choose something that has been sweetened, stick with healthy options that have sweetness added to make them tastier like whole grain cereals or low fat milk.

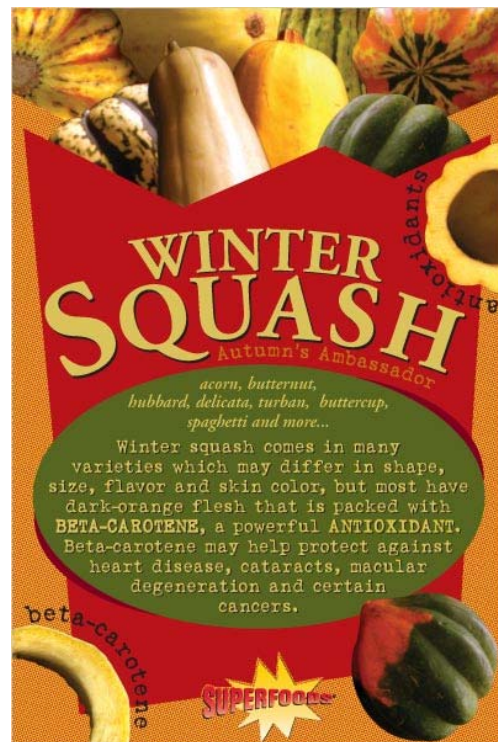
### *How to stay healthy with a sweet tooth:*

- ▶ Stick to foods that are naturally sweet. Fruit is a great example of a healthy food that is naturally sweet. In addition to the sweet sugar, fruit provides important vitamins, minerals and fiber.
- ▶ Taste before you sweeten. Before you add syrup to your pancakes, sugar to your iced tea or whipped cream to your dessert taste it first. You might realize that it tastes pretty good without all of the added sweetness.
- ▶ Step down slowly. You might find if you gradually reduce the amount of sweets you eat and drink that the less it will take for you to consider something sweet tasting.
- ▶ Remember sugar-free doesn't equal healthy. Sweet foods or drinks that have been sweetened with artificial sweeteners instead of sugar just have less sugar. They don't necessarily have less calories or more nutrients than the original version.
- ▶ Watch your drinks. For some people, they get most of their sweets in the liquid form—soda, fruit punch, energy drinks, etc. Compare the label on your favorite drink to a candy label. You might be surprised to see which has more sugar. Thinking of these drinks as liquid candy might make you less likely to choose them next time.



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