

How Much Candy Do Americans Eat In A Whole Year?

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THE CONVERSATION - From sweet treats to holiday indulgences, candy plays a big role in American culture, with consumption surging around [Valentine's Day](#), [Halloween](#), [Easter](#), and [Christmas](#).

Sugar, whether it's derived from sugar cane, sugar beets, or corn, [is a primary ingredient](#) in all candies, partly because it can be masterfully crafted to all sorts of different sizes, shapes, and textures. Whether you are nibbling on rock candy, chewing on taffy, munching on jellybeans, or licking a lollipop, you're basically eating [spoonfuls of sugar](#).

The average American consumes an [estimated 8 pounds of candy](#) (3.7 kilograms) annually, with children eating even more. On a typical day, 1 in 4 eat at least some candy and almost all of us do it once a year. [As a dietitian](#), I advise moderation, even on special occasions.

That's because growing kids, and adults too, need food to have enough energy, maintain strong bones and muscles and help their bodies fight infections.

Fruits, vegetables, grains, dairy products, and nuts contain [natural sugars](#) for energy that are better for you. Those foods also provide nutrients, like iron and vitamin C, that your body needs for good health and survival.

While the sugars in candy do provide plenty of calories for energy, your body doesn't benefit from those "[empty calories](#)." In fact, your body does not need them at all. Sugars that do not provide health benefits are called [added sugars](#).

What happens when you eat too much candy

Another reason it's best to eat only small amounts of candy is that if you eat so much of it on an empty stomach that you feel full, your body will get [too little of the important stuff it needs](#).

Eating too much candy, [drinking too many sugary beverages](#) and consuming other sources of added sugar can leave you feeling [tired and generally unwell](#) in the short term. If you ingest too much sugar all the time, your risk for lifelong health conditions, such as [diabetes or heart disease](#), will rise.

Candy can also harm your teeth, increasing the [chances you'll get cavities](#). They cause a lot of pain – especially when the [roots and nerves](#) of your teeth are damaged.

Making every bite count

Rather than downing an entire bag of gummy worms, eat a couple pieces and save some for later.

It's also best to fill up on healthier choices. One sweet choice could be a low-sugar yogurt, which has calcium – which is good for your teeth and bones – or an apple, which is packed with [vitamin C and fiber](#).

For a chocolate fix, consider [dipping strawberries in melted chocolate](#) – it's fun, creative and a healthier option.



Just a bit

Like other experts, I recommend that adults and children alike aim for moderation by consuming no more than [10% of their total calories from added sugars](#).

For [young children](#) that can mean limiting added sugars to no more than about 100 calories. That's about equal to [25 grams at most](#), the amount in 6 teaspoons of sugar or [24 Skittles](#).

For teens or adults requiring [2,000 calories daily](#), sugar should amount to no more than 50 grams – about 200 of those calories.

However, Americans consume sugar in many other ways. Many of us drink sodas and other sugary drinks. We eat other sweet things, such as cake, ice cream, cookies, pie and brownies. [Processed foods](#) ranging from bread to spaghetti sauce often include significant amounts of added sugars.

Still, having a little candy once in a while is fine. Just make sure you follow a balanced diet, drink plenty of water and brush your teeth regularly.