

# Dietitian suggests adding a little sugar to water for horses away from home

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Barbara Intermill's horses don't adjust well to the water when she takes them away from home. So she's experimented with some advice from seasoned horse travelers. Common guidance is to add something that will

make the strange water taste more palatable.

Horses often refuse to drink when they are away from home, according to horse specialists at the University of Minnesota Extension Service. They caution that the consequences can be serious if they don't get enough fluids.

One solution they suggest is to add something sweet to their water, such as clear (caffeine-free) soda. So Intermill, a registered dietitian nutritionist, added a can to their 25 gallon trough and sure enough, they have become much happier campers.

If a small amount of sugar can help equines, what about we humans? Unfortunately, sugar has a bad reputation simply because we eat way too much of it. Excess intake can erode teeth and add extra pounds. Whether or not sugar is directly related to obesity, type 2 diabetes and [heart disease](#) has still not been confirmed, however, according to a 2023 overview of this topic in Nutrition Research Reviews.

So is there a healthful way to consume sugar? Yes, there is, according to the most current 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. But here's the dilemma: In order for us to consume all the [essential nutrients](#) our bodies need, most (at least 85%) of our daily calories should be in the form of nutrient-dense foods— those rich in protein and/or calcium plus fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

We can make up the rest of our calorie needs by eating more nutrient-dense foods, of course. But there is room in a healthful diet, say experts, for occasional treats (think doughnuts, candy and sweetened beverages) that are not much more than sugar or fat.

But not much room. No more than 10% of the total calories we eat each day should be in the form of added sugar, according to the DGA. So, if I

consume 2,000 calories a day, my sugar allowance is no more than 200 calories.

If that sounds like a lot, consider this: A level teaspoon of sugar contains just 16 calories. Not bad. Yet a 12 ounce can of soda contains more than 9 teaspoons of sugar, or 140–150 calories worth. A large cola drink at McDonald's contains 19 teaspoons of sugar or close to 300 calories. Adds up quick, no?

Luckily, we have tools to help us avoid too much sugar. The Nutrition Facts label has a category that lists "Added Sugars" in grams. If you divide that number by 4, you will find how many teaspoons of sugar are in this product. And if you multiply the grams of sugar by 4, you will get the the amount of calories it contains.

Sound too hard? Just remember that, for horses or for people, a spoonful or two of [sugar](#) is probably our best bet.

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