

Sugars are naturally-occurring carbohydrates that can be present in the diet.

The same as other carbohydrates, sugars provide the body with 4kcal of energy per gram.

Sugars can be found in fruits, vegetables, dairy products, honey, jams and many other components of the diet.

When looking at an ingredients list you may see different sugars listed. The name that is used in this is dictated by legal requirements.

Below are the most common sugars and sources of sugars that you may come across.

Glucose (dextrose)	A monosaccharide (single sugar) that is found in plants. It is in fruit and vegetables and can be used in foods such as biscuits and cereal bars.
Fructose	A monosaccharide that is also found primarily in fruit and vegetables. It can be added to food products such as sports drinks and bars.
Lactose	A milk sugar found in dairy products. It can also be an ingredient in foods like biscuits and instant soups.
Sucrose (table sugar)	A disaccharide (two joined sugars) made up of glucose and fructose. Found in plants—it is present in sugar beet, sugar cane, fruit and vegetables. It can be an ingredient in foods such as cakes, biscuits and drinks. It is also the type of sugar that we buy in the shops called granulated, caster, demerara etc. These packets of sugar are the sucrose extracted from either sugar beet or sugar cane.
Maltose	A disaccharide made up of two glucose molecules. It is found in germinating seeds such as barley and is used in malted drinks and beers.
Isoglucose (glucose-fructose syrup)	Made from hydrolysed starch, this is comprised of approximately 58% glucose and 42% fructose. This can be used in cakes, cereals, fruit products and drinks.
Invert sugar	A mixture of glucose and fructose, obtained from the hydrolysis of sucrose and found in fruits and honey. It can be used in foods like confectionery, ice-cream and baked foods.
Honey	Made by bees as food for the hive, this contains fructose and glucose. With its unique taste it can be an ingredient in foods such as snack bars and cakes.
Molasses/Treacle	A viscous syrup that is a by-product of extracting sucrose. This contains sucrose, glucose and fructose and can be used in foods such as gingerbread.
Agave Syrup	Extracted from the agave plant, this primarily contains fructose and some glucose. It can be used as an ingredient in products such as drinks, confectionery and cakes.
Fruit juice concentrates	Concentrated fruit juices provide a source of fructose, glucose and sucrose. These can come from a wide range of different fruits, so can be called for example, grape, date or prune syrup. These can be used to sweeten drinks, biscuits, cakes etc.
High-Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS)	This comprises of fructose and glucose, extracted from corn. Although this receives a lot of media attention and is a common product in America, it is not commonly used in the UK.

Which sugars are used in different recipes, depends on what properties are desired. For example, sugars act as a preservative, provide texture, extend shelf-life and act as a bulking agent, as well as being a sweetener.

To the body the source of the sugars makes no difference — it cannot distinguish where identical molecules have come from.