Reducing Sugar In Your Child’s Diet
Most children are IN LOVE with sugar. And the food companies know it. Packaging for sugar filled items is plastered with characters that they know and love, and they are all kept right at their eye-level in the hopes that you’ll cave when the ‘I want Froot Loops’ meltdown ensues.

So how are we supposed to compete with all of this??

While I can’t promise that the meltdowns won’t still happen, there ARE some ways that we can reduce some of our children’s sugar intake without too much of a fuss.

Win. Win.

Drinks and Juices: This is probably the biggest culprit of sugar in our children’s diet. They ingest SO much sugar via beverages. The first trick is to water them down. I have always cut my children’s juice with water at a 1:1 ratio, so they are used to it, but if your children are older you may want to start with 2:1 to get them accustomed to it. My older children now find full strength juice too sweet since they are so used to drinking it diluted. Yay!

You may also want to try diluting it with seltzer water (not tonic!). My four year old thinks ‘fizzy juice’ is a special treat. :) This is also a good substitute for soda.

Fun straws or cups reserved only for these types of beverages can be encouraging too.

Yogurt: Yogurt is healthy, right? Unfortunately most times this is not true. ‘Children’s yogurt is FULL of sugar and artificial colors. :( But the good news is that there are healthier options! Woohoo!

My favorite is Stonyfield brand. Both their Yo Baby and Yo Kids yogurts are organic and free from artificial colors, artificial flavors, and high fructose corn syrup.

Siggi’s brand is a good one as well. Their yogurt contains only natural ingredients, plus they use hormone-free milk and a lot less sugar.

The squeezers also make great desserts if you freeze them!

Another great option is kefir. Kefir is a cultured milk drink that is very similar in taste to yogurt. It is high in protein, calcium and vitamin D, and contains tons of probiotics. It is so similar to those sugar-laden drinkable yogurt bottles that you COULD refill those fun character bottles with kefir and your kids would be none the wiser. Just sayin. ;-)
**Popsicles and Ice Cream:** If your kids love frozen treats, then you are in luck because this one is an easy switch! Frozen fruits puree beautifully into creamy treats, and they don’t take long to make! Here are a couple healthy ice creams to try:

- **Strawberry Banana Ice Cream**
- **Super Yummy Green Ice Creams**

And here are two healthy popsicle options:

- **Strawberry Creamsicle**
- **Wacky Watermelon Pops**

**After-School Snacks:** I have a snack shelf for my four-year-old full of low-sugar snacks. It works well for a few reasons. First off, he gets a choice. Secondly, he feels empowered because he gets to be the one making the choice. Thirdly, it helps me out because what he can choose from has already been established, so we don’t have a battle on our hands about what he can and can’t have.

I like to by the stuff for his snack shelf at Trader Joe’s because then he can grab one of the little carts and feel like he’s shopping for his snacks too, but most of these items (with the exception of the plantain chips) can be found at any grocery store.

Here’s what’s on his snack shelf:

- dried fruit with no sugar added
- real fruit leather
- unsweetened organic applesauce
- a variety of nuts
- raisins
- plantain chips
- bananas

There is always fresh fruit and cheese sticks in the fridge that he is free to choose from as well.
Cereals and Other Sugary Breakfast Items: Breakfast is usually the meal that contains the most sugar. We covered a lot of breakfast ideas in the Breakfast Guide, and as mentioned you can find some healthier muffins, coffee cakes, etc on my Breakfast Board on Pinterest: https://www.pinterest.com/wellfedfamilies/breakfast/

But what if your kids are super stuck on cereal? Fortunately there are some healthier brands. Kashi, Cascadian Farms, and Barbara’s all make low sugar varieties with healthy ingredients. Just be sure to add some fruit or nuts to up the nutritional value.

Cookies, brownies, etc: This is another category where making your own can make ALL the difference. I typically make one ‘treat’ on the weekend for us to enjoy through the week. Baking with flours such as almond and coconut, and using natural sweeteners such as honey and real maple syrup vastly increases the nutritional value of these goodies, without feeling like you’re being deprived.

Here are a couple to try:
Detoxinista’s Chewy Brownies
Chocolate Chip Cookies