

Drinking 100-Percent Juice Might Not Lead to Teen Overweight

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Although some studies have linked drinking 100 percent juice to excess weight in young children, this might not be the case for teenagers, a new study suggests.

Several previous studies have identified intake of 100 percent fruit [juice](#) as a possible factor in obesity in young children, since some studies found that preschoolers who drank 100 percent juice were more likely to be overweight. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting the consumption of fruit juice for all children, including teenagers.

The new study in the March-April issue of American Journal of Health Promotion used data from a national survey of about 3,900 teenagers that included an interview about diet and a medical and physical examination. Twenty-eight percent of the adolescents interviewed said they drank a 100-percent juice beverage that day.

The study received support or funding from the USDA Hatch Projects, the USDA/Agricultural Research Service and the Juice Products Association, a trade group that represents the fruit and juice products industry.

The survey did not make a distinction between [fruit juice](#) or vegetable juice or whether the juice had pulp in it or not, said study co-author Theresa Nicklas, Dr.P.H., a professor of pediatrics at Baylor College of Medicine, Children's Nutrition Research Center.

Some products contain all juice, but are blends of various combinations of fruit and vegetable juices. Other juice products or juice beverages combine juice with water or seltzer, such as cranberry juice, which is too tart to drink straight. Some juice products add sugar, high-fructose corn syrup or artificial sweeteners.

In the study, there were no significant differences in weight, [body mass index](#), [waist circumference](#) or other measurement of body composition between the teens who drank juice and those who did not.

“Adolescents who consumed 100 percent juice did not show an association with [increased] weight,” Nicklas said.

The researchers found that these teens were more likely to say they had eaten whole fruit the day of the interview than those who did not drink 100 percent juice. Drinking 100 percent juice did not affect the consumption of milk, meat or grains.

“Given that this study was conducted in adolescents, it represents a potentially very different study population in terms of eating preferences and behaviors,” said Alice Ammerman, Dr. P.H., director of the department of nutrition at the Gillings School of Global Public Health, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Teenagers are more in control of their beverage consumption behavior than preschoolers. “With younger children there may be a tendency for juice to be used more as a ‘pacifying beverage’ when the child is fussy or unhappy,” she said.

“It would be very interesting to see to what degree the 100-percent juice may be replacing sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks and sports drinks and thus providing more nutrients with similar calories,” Ammerman added.

More information: O'Neil CE, Nicklas TA, Kleinman R. Relationship between 100% juice consumption and nutrient intake and weight of adolescents. Am J Health Promotion 24(4), 2010.

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