

Not so sweet: Increased added sugars intake parallels trends in weight gain

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Weight gain in adults coincided with increased consumption of added sugars, in a study reported today at the American Heart Association's Nutrition, Physical Activity and Metabolism/Cardiovascular Disease Epidemiology and Prevention 2011 Scientific Sessions. Added sugars are sugars and syrups added to foods during processing, preparation, or at the table.

Researchers reviewed added sugars intake and patterns of body weight over 27 years using data collected in the Minnesota Heart Survey, a surveillance study of adults ages 25 to 74 living in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. [Dietary intake](#) was assessed by a 24-hour recall. The heart survey includes six surveys looking at subjects' diet, height and weight. The surveys were conducted in 1980-82, 1985-87, 1990-92, 1995-97, 2000-02 and 2007-09. "There is limited data available looking at how added [sugar](#) intake is related to body mass index (BMI)," said Huifen Wang, M.S., lead author of the study and a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Public Health at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. "With the information provided, we examined the trends for [body mass index](#) and dietary intake of foods and beverages with added sugars across the six surveys," Wang said. "We looked at these trends by gender and by age group." BMI measures body weight in relation to height.

The researchers found:

- Added sugars intake increased along with BMI levels in men and women.
- Over 27 years, added sugars consumption increased among men and women and in all age groups. But added sugars intake leveled off between 2000-02 and 2007-09 surveys in men and women. Average BMI leveled off in women, which paralleled their added sugars intake; however, BMI in men continued to increase, while calories consumed from added sugars declined by 10.5 percent in the 2007-09 survey compared to the 2000-02 survey.
- In the 2007-09 survey, men consumed about 15.3 percent of their daily calories from added sugars, representing a substantial 37.8 percent increase from 1980-82.
- Among women, added sugars intake changed from 9.9 percent of total calories in 1980-82 to 13.4 percent of total calories in 2007-09.
- Across all survey years, women consumed less added sugars than men, while younger adults consumed more added sugars than older adults.

"Added sugars consumption increased over 20 years," Wang said.

"Although it declined slightly after 2000-02, the consumption of added sugars remained high among the Minnesota residents studied. Although other lifestyle factors should be considered as an explanation for the upward trend of BMI, public health efforts should advise limiting added sugar intake."

The American Heart Association recommends that no more than half of your daily discretionary calories come from added sugars. Discretionary calories are "left over" or what allowance remains in your daily calorie

limit after you've eaten the recommended types and amounts of foods that you need to meet nutrient requirements, such as fruit, vegetables, low-fat dairy products, high-fiber whole grains, lean meat, poultry and fish. Added sugars, alcoholic beverages and solid fats — including saturated fat and trans fat — are typically considered foods and nutrients that may be selected as discretionary calories. For example, most American women should consume no more than 100 calories of added sugars per day; most men, no more than 150 calories.

Strong scientific evidence is needed to determine whether added sugars intake is related to or promotes [weight gain](#) and other cardiovascular disease risk factors, Wang said.

"According to the 2010 Report of the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, it is also not yet clear whether the relationship between BMI and added sugar intake is due to additional calories or the added sugars, per se," she said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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