

Sugar as a potential health risk is getting a closer look

May 4 2011, By Jeffrey Norris



ABC News Nightline correspondent John Donovan interviews pediatric endocrinologist Robert Lustig about the dangers of consuming fructose during a visit to UCSF in March 2010. Credit: Susan Merrell

Robert Lustig, MD, a UCSF pediatrician and clinical researcher, is an outspoken iconoclast when it comes to diet and metabolism.

His interpretations of research results — his own and others — challenge conventional thinking about all calories counting equally, specifically as it relates to the [fructose](#) in [corn syrup](#) and table [sugar](#). Lustig explores the role of sugar consumption in obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other disorders.

Each sucrose molecule consists of one molecule of fructose joined to one molecule of glucose. In the gut, these two components are quickly split apart. High-fructose corn syrup is a less expensive mixture of

glucose and fructose. There is no point in belaboring the difference, according to Lustig, "High-fructose corn syrup and sucrose are exactly the same," he says. "They're equally bad. They're both poison in high doses."

The New York Times Magazine recently ran a long cover story that focused on Lustig's work and ideas. A shorter story covering the main points of Lustig's work — including his controversial views of the roles of the hormones leptin and insulin in the control of [metabolism](#) — was published earlier on [UCSF's website](#).

And in a UCSF Mini Medical School lecture posted on YouTube video that has garnered more than 1.2 million views, Lustig makes the case that the nation's current obesity epidemic can be blamed on a marked increase in the consumption of fructose over the last 30 years. Fructose has become ubiquitous in soft drinks and many processed foods.

Provided by University of California, San Francisco

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