

New study shows children and adolescents who eat candy are less overweight or obese

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Children and adolescents who eat candy tend to weigh less than their non-consuming counterparts, according to a new study published in *Food & Nutrition Research*, a peer-reviewed journal.

This is potentially important news given the current state of the childhood obesity epidemic. But lead researcher Carol O'Neil, PhD, MPH, LDN, RD, Louisiana State University Agricultural Center, wants to ensure the study is put into perspective.

"The study illustrates that children and [adolescents](#) who consume candy are less likely to be overweight or obese," O'Neil said. "However, the results of this study should not be construed as a hall-pass to overindulge. Candy should not replace nutrient-dense foods in the diet; it is a special treat and should be enjoyed in moderation."

Similar to a sister study that focused on adults (published earlier this year in *Nutrition Research*), this study examined the association of candy consumption on intakes of total energy, fat, and added sugars; [diet quality](#); weight/adiposity parameters; and [risk factors](#) for cardiovascular disease in 11,182 U.S. children 2-13 years of age and adolescents 14-18 years of age participating in the 1999-2004 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES).

Striking a Balance: Candy and Health

While children and adolescent candy consumers in the study did have slightly higher intakes of total energy and added sugars, they were 22 percent and 26 percent, respectively, less likely to be overweight or obese than non-candy consumers—suggesting their ability to successfully navigate the "calories in, calories out," balance over time.

Specific findings include:

- **Cardiovascular Risk Factors:** It was a positive finding that C-reactive protein (CRP), a non-specific marker of inflammation and one way to assess risk for cardiovascular and other chronic diseases, was actually lower in sugar candy consumers. There were no other associations between candy consumption and cardiovascular risk factors, including no difference in blood pressure or blood lipid levels (a cholesterol indicator).
- **Diet Quality:** Diet quality was measured by the Healthy Eating Index 2005, a standard created by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assess conformance to federal dietary guidance. The study found overall, there was no difference in diet quality in candy consumers compared with non-consumers. It is worth noting however, that overall diet quality was very poor in all groups, regardless of whether candy was consumed.
- **Weight, Body Mass Index (BMI) and Waist Circumference:** These key measures for overweight and obesity were lower for candy consumers as compared to non-consumers.

"[Candy](#) is a fun part of children's lives – as a treat, in celebrations and for holidays," said Alison Bodor, senior vice president of public policy and advocacy, National Confectioners Association. "It's not intended to replace nutrient-dense foods in the diet, but it certainly can provide

moments of happiness within the context of a healthy lifestyle."

More information: The article abstract can be accessed here:
www.foodandnutritionresearch.n...nr/article/view/5794

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