

# Recommended levels of sugar halved

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The World Health Organisation (WHO) has halved its recommended levels of sugar intake, thanks to a study carried out by Newcastle University academics.

WHO's current recommendation, from 2002, is that sugars should make up less than 10% of total [energy intake](#) per day. The new draft guidelines, which are being consulted on, suggest that a reduction to below 5% of total energy intake per day would have additional benefits. Five per cent of total energy intake is equivalent to around 25 grams (around 6 teaspoons) of sugar per day for an adult of normal Body Mass Index (BMI).

The suggested limits on intake of sugars in the draft guideline apply to all monosaccharides (such as glucose, fructose) and disaccharides (such as sucrose or table sugar) that are added to food by the manufacturer, the cook or the consumer, as well as sugars that are naturally present in honey, syrups, fruit juices and fruit concentrates.

Much of the sugars consumed today are "hidden" in processed foods that are not usually seen as sweets. For example, 1 tablespoon of ketchup contains around 4 grams (around 1 teaspoon) of sugars. A single can of sugar-sweetened soda contains up to 40 grams (around 10 teaspoons) of sugar.

The draft guideline was formulated based on analyses of all published scientific studies on the consumption of sugars and how that relates to excess weight gain and tooth decay in adults and children.

## Tooth decay

Paula Moynihan, Professor of Nutrition and Oral Health at Newcastle University, carried out the tooth decay portion of the study. She said: "The less sugar you eat, the lower your risk of dental decay."

Funded by Newcastle University's Centre for Oral Health Research, Professor Moynihan, and Dr Sarah Kelly (now at Cambridge University) scrutinised all the studies which had looked at relationships between amount of sugars consumed and levels of dental caries ([tooth decay](#)). They found 55 relevant studies worldwide, dating back to 1950.

Professor Moynihan added: "The public need better information on the health risks of sugary foods and drinks and there needs to be clearer information on the levels of sugars in our foods and drinks. We need to make it easier for people to make healthier choices when it comes to sugars by ensuring that options lower in added sugars are made widely available in schools, shops and the workplace."

**More information:** "Effect on Caries of Restricting Sugars Intake: Systematic Review to Inform WHO Guidelines." P.J. Moynihan and S.A.M. Kelly. *Journal of Dental Research*, January 2014; vol. 93, 1: pp. 8-18., first published on December 16, 2013.

[jdr.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/93/1/8](http://jdr.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/93/1/8)

Provided by Newcastle University

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