

## Processed foods and soft drinks push up Asian salt, fat and sugar

May 26 2014

---



Credit: Christian Ladluba

Developing countries in Asia may be set to join the first-world obesity epidemic, a new ANU study of nutrition across 12 countries has found.

"We have shown that countries across Asia are on a steep upward trajectory towards diets high in fat, salt and sugar," said lead author Dr Phillip Baker from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population

Health.

"This has major implications for health systems in these countries."

The study, published in the journal *Obesity Reviews*, found that throughout Asia baked goods, vegetable oils and [soft drinks](#) were the main carriers of fat, salt and sugar, which are likely to be important drivers of obesity, diabetes and heart disease in the region.

The findings show developing nations in Asia face a potential rise in obesity, which could have implications for their health budgets. Of particular concern are India, China, Malaysia and Thailand where the prevalence of type-2 diabetes has rapidly increased in the urban centres.

The detailed study uncovered differences amongst 12 Asian countries of different income levels. For example, upper-middle income populations such as Thailand, Philippines and Malaysia are consuming sugary drinks and vegetable oils at much higher levels than high-income countries like Japan and South Korea, where consumption has slowed.

The team also identified the food groups which were driving the increases in undesirable nutrients in each country. The biggest increase in sugar has come from increased consumption of soft drinks, with Thailand leading the way. Malaysia leads in consumption of [vegetable oils](#).

In contrast with earlier studies which took data from food surveys, Dr Baker and co-author Professor Sharon Friel used sales data from the food industry, which allowed for standardised comparisons between countries.

"Asia is home to 3.6 billion inhabitants – improving nutrition can have a huge public health impact," Dr Baker said.

"Asian diets are traditionally rich in staple vegetables, rice and fish. However the increasing presence of transnational food and beverage corporations in the region may be driving a shift towards diets high in processed foods." Dr Baker said.

Provided by Australian National University

Citation: Processed foods and soft drinks push up Asian salt, fat and sugar (2014, May 26)  
retrieved 25 April 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-foods-soft-asian-salt-fat.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.