

People who consume too much high fructose corn syrup could be at risk for NAFLD

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High fructose consumption should be avoided to prevent the development of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), according to research being presented Sunday, June 12 at ENDO 2022, the Endocrine

Society's annual meeting in Atlanta, Ga.

Fructose is a natural sugar present in fruits, fruit juices, certain vegetables and honey. In these forms, fructose sugars can be part of a nutritious diet. However, fructose is also a component of [high-fructose corn syrup](#), which manufacturers make from [corn starch](#) and add to [unhealthy foods](#) such as sodas and candies. High fructose foods have been associated with metabolic disorders such as obesity and diabetes, which are the two main causes of NAFLD.

About 24% of U.S. adults have NAFLD, a chronic disease in which excess fat builds up in your liver. This buildup of fat is not caused by heavy alcohol use. NAFLD can progress to chronic liver damage and lead to death. Diet and exercise are the standard of care for NAFLD as no medicines have been approved to treat the disease.

"NAFLD is a serious problem and it is increasing in the population. There is a racial/ethnic difference in the prevalence of the NAFLD. People consume high-fructose corn syrup in foods, soft drinks and other beverages. Some studies suggested that consumption of high-fructose corn syrup is related to the development of NAFLD," said lead author Theodore Friedman, M.D., Ph.D., of Charles R. Drew University in Los Angeles, Calif.

For this study, the researchers analyzed data from 3,292 participants enrolled in the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey 2017-2018. They found the greatest proportion of those who consumed the highest fructose were Mexican Americans (48%) and non-Hispanic Blacks (44%) with a low percentage of non-Hispanic whites (33%). The highest prevalence of NAFLD was among Mexican Americans who consumed the highest amount of fructose (70%).

"We found that when adjusting for the demographics and behavioral

factors (smoking, modest alcohol consumption, diet quality and [physical activity](#)), high fructose consumption was associated with a higher chance of NAFLD among the [total population](#) and Mexican Americans," Friedman said.

A better fitting model emerged when the researchers additionally adjusted for body composition and laboratory variables, where they found that high fructose consumption was related to higher chances of NAFLD in the total population, Mexican Americans and Whites.

"High fructose consumption in Mexican Americans contributed, in part, to the health disparity of NAFLD," Friedman said.

Friedman and colleagues recommend [health care providers](#) encourage patients to consume less foods and beverages with high-fructose corn syrup to prevent the development of NAFLD.

Provided by The Endocrine Society

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