

Scientists say consumers confused about sugars

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Three top researchers corrected inaccuracies and misunderstandings concerning high fructose corn syrup's impact on the American diet. They also examined how the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) considers this sweetener in light of the upcoming 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

"Contrary to its name, [high fructose corn syrup](#) is essentially a corn sugar," stated sweetener expert John S. White, Ph.D., president of White Technical Research. "Recent marketing claims that sugar is healthier than high [fructose corn](#) syrup are misleading to consumers."

"By every parameter yet measured in human beings, high fructose corn syrup and sugar are identical. This is not surprising since high fructose corn syrup and sugar are metabolized the same by the body, have the same level of sweetness and the same number of calories per gram," noted James M. Rippe, M.D., cardiologist and biomedical sciences professor at the University of Central Florida.

"This is a marketing issue, not a metabolic issue," stated David Klurfeld, Ph.D., national program leader for human nutrition in USDA's Agricultural Research Service and editor of the June 2009 Journal of Nutrition supplement, "The State of the Science on Dietary Sweeteners Containing Fructose," in response to recent reformulations by manufacturers of products that once contained high fructose corn syrup. "The real issue is not high fructose corn syrup. It's that we've forgotten what a real serving size is. We have to eat less of everything," he noted.

Increased Caloric Intake, Not a Single Sweetener, the Likely Cause of Obesity

Fructose-containing sweeteners — such as sugar, invert sugar, honey, fruit juice concentrates, and high fructose corn syrup — are essentially

interchangeable in composition, calories, and metabolism. Replacing high fructose corn syrup in foods with other fructose-containing sweeteners will provide neither improved nutrition nor a meaningful solution to the obesity crisis, according to Dr. White. "In light of similarities in composition, sweetness, energy content, processing, and metabolism, claims that such sweetener substitutions bring nutritional benefit to children and their families appear disingenuous and misguided," White says.

Growing Body of Evidence

The American Medical Association helped put to rest a common misunderstanding about high fructose corn syrup and obesity, stating that "high fructose syrup does not appear to contribute to obesity more than other caloric sweeteners." Even former critics of high fructose corn syrup dispelled myths and distanced themselves from earlier speculation about the sweetener's link to obesity in a comprehensive scientific review published in the December 2008 *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

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