

Popcorn at the movies still an unhealthy treat

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(PhysOrg.com) -- A study carried out in 1994 by advocacy group CSPI (Center for Science in the Public Interest) found that popcorn being sold by cinema chains in the US was high in saturated fat and calories, and a new survey has found that not much has changed in the intervening years. The study found a medium serve of popcorn sold in US cinemas can contain up to 1,200 calories, and that's without the topping.

The new analysis, also carried out by CSPI, used an independent laboratory to test multiple samples of medium serves of popcorn (without topping) bought from the three largest movie chains in the US: Cinemark, AMC, and Regal Entertainment Group.

Cinemark's medium serve was around 14 cups and contained three grams of saturated fat and 760 [calories](#). A medium serve (about nine cups) at AMC contained 33 grams saturated fat and 590 calories, but a medium serve from Regal (equivalent to 20 cups) contained 60 grams of saturated fat and 1,200 calories. Cinemark's popcorn is lower in saturated fat because the corn is popped using canola oil instead of the 90% [saturated fat](#) coconut oil used by AMC and Regal.

The buttery topping available for the popcorn would add approximately another 200 calories in each case.

The tests also showed the popcorn samples all contained too much salt, with sodium levels ranging from 210 mg in a small AMC popcorn, up to 1,500 mg in Cinemark's large tub, which represents the recommended [sodium content](#) for an entire day.

After the survey 15 years ago shocked moviegoers, some cinemas did offer lower calorie "air-popped" popcorn as an alternative, but it soon proved unpopular and customers demanded a return to the more traditional method of popping corn in oil.

Popcorn has always been a popular part of the movie experience, and a representative of Regal said popcorn is meant to be an occasional treat rather than daily fare. A medium serve of Regal's popcorn with the topping and a medium [soda](#) contains around 1,800 calories in all, which is equivalent to the calories in four slices of bacon, four sausages and six scrambled eggs with cheese. The current recommended daily calorie intake for adult women and men is 2,000 and 2,500 respectively.

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