



Added scrutiny for added sugars

I understand that people are advised to cut back on added sugars in the diet. But why? Is it just that they're "empty calories" or are there other reasons?

That's a question even the experts are pondering these days.

In the past, consuming too much added sugar was seen as a sickeningly sweet path to both weight gain and cavities, but if you kept your weight in check and your teeth in good shape, it wasn't really seen as harmful in other ways.

But in the last five years or so, new research is causing the scientific community to take a second look.

Studies and analysis in the scientific literature indicate that overconsumption of added sugars could in itself play a role in the development of heart disease. While not yet settled science, these ideas are worth considering.

One example is a study, "Added Sugar Intake and Cardiovascular Diseases Mortality Among U.S. Adults," that was published in April in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. It examined data from National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys conducted from 1988 through 2010, which included information from more than 31,000 people, along with additional information collected between 1988 and 2006 from nearly 12,000 people. After controlling for other risk

factors, including high blood pressure, smoking, alcohol consumption, total calorie intake and obesity, the researchers found an association between higher added sugar intake and a higher risk of heart disease. The risk became apparent when added sugar exceeded 15 percent of daily calorie intake. That's just 300 calories on a 2,000-calorie-a-day diet. You can get perilously close to that amount with one 20-ounce bottle of regular soda, not to mention added sugars typically consumed in other foods — cookies, ice cream, candy, breakfast cereal, and even foods like pasta sauce, granola bars, barbecue sauce, fat-free salad dressing and flavored yogurt.

Some fruits and vegetables — carrots and other root vegetables, for example, and fruits such as bananas and grapes — provide more sugars than you might expect, but they shouldn't be lumped together with foods that have added sugars. Fruits and vegetables offer so many other benefits, including vitamins, minerals, fiber and phytochemicals, that it's important to eat more, not less, of them. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that adults eat 1.5 to 2 cups of fruit a day, and 2 to 4 cups of vegetables a day, depending on overall calorie intake.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1043, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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