



A Comprehensive Perspective of Sugar and its Impact on Health

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DESCRIPTION

Sugar, a simple carbohydrate found naturally in many foods, has been a part of human diets for thousands of years. It is not only a source of energy but also adds flavor to our meals, making them more enjoyable. However, in recent years, the consumption of sugar, particularly in the form of sugar-sweetened beverages and processed foods, has skyrocketed, leading to a host of health problems. This article aims to delve into the impact of excessive sugar consumption on health and the importance of reducing sugar intake.

The sugar epidemic

The modern diet is replete with sugar. In morning cereals, our favorite drinks, and even the 'healthy' snack bars we munch on. The World Health Organization recommends that added sugars should make up less than 10% of our total energy intake, but many of us consume far more than this. This excessive sugar consumption has been linked to a range of health problems, including weight gain, diabetes, and heart disease.

Impact of excessive sugar intake

One of the most immediate and visible effects of excessive sugar intake is weight gain. Sugar is high in calories, and when consumed in large amounts, it can lead to a calorie surplus, causing weight gain. Moreover, foods and drinks high in sugar often lack other nutrients and fail to create a feeling of fullness, leading to overeating. A systematic review published in the Nutrition Reviews journal found that high consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages was significantly associated with weight gain and a higher risk of type 2 diabetes and selected cardiovascular disease outcomes in Asian populations.

Sugar and chronic diseases

The impact of sugar on health goes beyond weight gain. High sugar intake has been linked to an increased risk of developing chronic diseases. For instance, consuming too much sugar can lead to insulin resistance, a key factor in the development of type 2 diabetes. Furthermore, excessive sugar consumption can increase blood pressure and inflammation, contribute to weight gain, and increase the risk of heart disease.

The same systematic review mentioned earlier found that high sugar-sweetened beverage consumption was associated with a greater risk of type 2 diabetes, even after adjusting for body mass index. This suggests that the impact of sugar on diabetes risk goes beyond its effect on body weight.

Reducing sugar intake for healthier living

Given the detrimental effects of excessive sugar consumption on health, reducing sugar intake is a critical part of a healthy lifestyle. This can be achieved by making conscious dietary choices such as opting for whole foods over processed ones, reducing the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, and reading food labels to be aware of the sugar content in packaged foods.

CONCLUSION

While sugar in moderation is a part of a balanced diet, excessive sugar consumption poses significant health risks. From weight gain to chronic diseases like diabetes and heart disease, the evidence against high sugar intake is compelling. Therefore, it is important to be attentive of our sugar consumption and make dietary choices that support our overall health. Public health strategies to reduce sugar consumption are warranted and can play a significant role in curbing the sugar epidemic.

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Received: 15-May-2023, Manuscript No. JNWL-23-22284; **Editor assigned:** 17-May-2023, PreQC No. JNWL-23-22284 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 31-May-2023, QC No. JNWL-23-22284; **Revised:** 07-Jun-2023, Manuscript No. JNWL-23-22284 (R); **Published:** 14-Jun-2023, DOI: 10.35248/2593-9793.23.8.173

Citation: Lee C (2023) A Comprehensive Perspective of Sugar and its Impact on Health. J Nutr Weight Loss. 8:173.

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