

Enjoying sugar & having a healthy body weight



About 39% of the world's adult population are overweight, with 13% obese.

The fundamental cause of obesity and overweight is an energy imbalance between kilojoules consumed and kilojoules expended. An increased intake of energy dense foods and an increase in sedentary behaviours have been associated with this global epidemic. Energy balance is the key to preventing obesity and its associated illnesses – so how can you enjoy sugar and maintain a healthy weight?



Sugar and weight maintenance

Sugar is a common component in our diets and has been mentioned as contributing to the obesity trend. However, international medical and food organisations, including the Institute of Medicine (USA), the European Food Safety Authority and the National Health and Medical Research Council (Australia) have found no direct link between sugar intake and overweight and obesity.

This fact is further supported by the observation that in New Zealand and Australia total sugar intake has declined in both males and females since the mid-nineties and apparent sugar consumption per capita has fallen by 26% between 1951 and 2011, whilst overweight and obesity rates continue to climb.

Why people gain weight

The behaviours around eating food are complex, involving biological, social, psychological and cultural factors. The increase in obesity can be partly attributed to our modern, affluent lifestyles which have enabled us to be less physically active and indulge in as much food and drink as we desire.

A consequence of this is that we can easily consume more energy than we expend in our daily activities, resulting in weight gain.

In short, the obesity trend is not a reflection of how much we consume of a particular ingredient, like sugar, but of how many kilojoules from food and drinks we consume overall, and whether we use up these kilojoules in our daily activities.

Definitions

Body Mass Index (BMI) is a commonly used measure for defining whether a person is a healthy weight or not. It is calculated by dividing your weight by the square of your height (kg/m^2).

A BMI of:

Less than 18.5 = underweight
18.5 to 24.99 = healthy weight
25 to 29.99 = overweight
30 or more = obese

NB: These BMI ranges are based on a Caucasian, adult population. The range may vary for different population and ethnic groups.



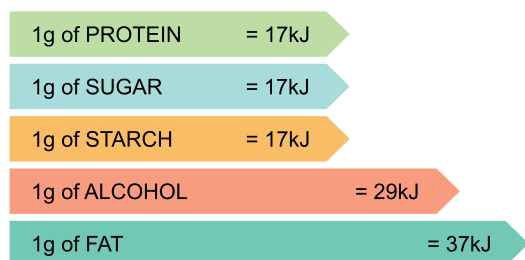
Analysis of the 2011-12 National Nutrition Study found that on average, over 35% of total daily energy was being consumed from discretionary or "junk" foods. It is recommended that in order to maintain a healthy weight, discretionary food consumption should be reduced.



What you can do to manage your weight

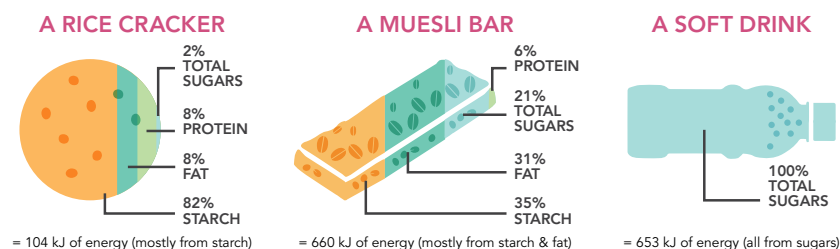
To achieve and maintain a healthy weight you need to eat a balanced diet and choose nutritious foods that meet your energy needs. Regular physical activity is another way of helping you keep your weight in check.

The energy in our food comes from either protein, carbohydrate (sugar and starch), fat or alcohol, or, a combination of these. It is good to understand how much energy (or kJ) these five nutrients release in the body as they are not the same. The diagram below shows protein and carbohydrates are 60% of the energy of alcohol and about half the energy of fat gram for gram.



It is also important to understand that the total amount of kilojoules contained in a food or drink will be the total amount of kilojoules produced by all the fat, protein, carbohydrates and alcohol combined in that food or beverage. So, foods which have more fat or alcohol in them will likely have higher kilojoule contents.

Knowing what is in food and where the energy is coming from can help you maintain a healthy weight. Some examples of the energy breakdown of a few common foods is provided below:



Finding out the total energy content of the foods and drinks you consume

The total energy contained in a food or drink is displayed in the Nutrition Information Panel of the food packaging as illustrated below. In this example, most of the 757 kilojoules (kJ) of energy comes from carbohydrates (starch). If you wanted to compare the kilojoule content of different products, then you would compare the amount of kilojoules per 100g or 100mL so you are comparing the same quantity of product.

NUTRITION INFORMATION PANEL		
Typical Composition	A 50g serving provides	100g provides
Energy	757kJ 179kcal	1514kJ 358kcal
Protein	5.5g	11.0g
Carbohydrate	30.2g	60.4g
of which sugars	0.8g	1.5g
Fat	4.1g	8.1g
of which saturated	0.8g	1.6g
mono-unsaturated	1.9g	3.8g
polyunsaturated	1.4g	2.7g
Fibre	4.3g	8.5g
Sodium	trace	trace



THE SHORT AND SWEET OF IT

Sugar is not directly responsible for the 'obesity epidemic'

1. International food and medicine organisations have found no conclusive link between sugar intake and being overweight or obese.
2. The main cause of obesity in modern, affluent societies is energy imbalance, people are consuming more kilojoules from food and drinks than they are using up in their daily activities, which results in weight gain.

Sugar can be enjoyed as part of a healthy diet when consumed in moderation

1. Sugar is a source of energy but produces about half the amount of kilojoules, gram for gram, as fat – a gram of sugar produces 17 kilojoules while fat produces 37 kilojoules.
2. By watching the kilojoule content of everything you eat and drink, and by exercising regularly, you can enjoy sugar in moderation as part of a healthy diet and lifestyle.

**Information based on an overview of the scientific evidence.
For individual health advice see a qualified health professional.**

Further Reading

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics. Australian health survey 2011–12 Canberra; 2012.
2. National Health and Medical Research Council. Australian Dietary Guidelines. Canberra, ACT; 2013
3. European Food Safety Authority. Scientific Opinion on Dietary Reference Values for carbohydrates and dietary fibre. EFSA Journal. 2010; 8(3): 1462 (77pp)
4. Institute of Medicine of the National Academies. Dietary reference intakes. Washington DC; 2005.
5. Barclay AW, Brand-miller J. The Australian paradox: a substantial decline in sugars intake over the same timeframe that overweight and obesity have increased. Nutrients. 2011; 3: 491–504.
6. NSW Government: Health. BMI calculator (Adult) [Internet]. NSW, Australia: Centre for Population Health; [cited Nov 2016]. Available from: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/heal/Pages/bmi.aspx>

**More info available at
www.allaboutsugars.com**

This resource has been developed by the Australian Sugar Industry Alliance and aims to provide science based information on sugars and health.

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