
Death by Chocolate: Added Sugar Increases Risk of Cardiovascular Disease



According to a new study published by JAMA Internal Medicine the consumption of added sugar, which as per definition is added during the processing or preparing of foods, not naturally occurring as in fruits and fruit juices, is associated with increased risk for death from cardiovascular disease (CVD).

Many US adults consume more added sugar than expert panels recommend for a healthy diet, though these recommendations vary and there is no universally accepted threshold for unhealthy levels.

The study background mentions that the Institute of Medicine recommends added sugar make up less than 25 percent of total calories, whereas the World Health Organization recommends less than 10 percent. Limiting added sugars to less than 100 calories daily for women and 150 calories daily for men is the recommendation of the American Heart Association.

Sugar-sweetened beverages, grain-based desserts, dairy desserts, fruit drinks and candy are significant sources of added sugar in Americans' diets, with a can of regular soda containing about 35g of sugar (equivalent to roughly 140 calories).

The authors of the study, led by Quanhe Yang, Ph.D., of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta, based their research on national health survey data to investigate added sugar consumption as a percentage of daily calories and to estimate association between consumption and CVD.

Findings show that during the years 1988-1994 the average percentage of daily calories from added sugar was at 15.7%, increasing to 16.8% from 1999 to 2004, then registering a decrease to 14.9 percent in 2005-2010.

During those last five years, 71.4% of adults consumed 10 percent or more of their calories from added sugar, and about 10% of adults consumed 25 percent or more of their calories from added sugar.

The authors note the risk of death from CVD increased with a higher percentage of calories from added sugar, and regular consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, set at seven servings or more per week, was associated with increased risk of dying from CVD.

In conclusion the authors state that their results supported current recommendations to limit the intake of calories from added sugars in US diets.

Commentary: New Unsweetened Truths About Sugar

In a related commentary, Laura A. Schmidt, Ph.D., M.S.W., M.P.H., of the University of California, San Francisco, writes: "We are in the midst of a paradigm shift in research on the health effects of sugar, one fueled by extremely high rates of added sugar overconsumption in the American public."

Schmidt credits the study with contributing a range of new findings to the growing body of research on sugar as an independent risk factor in chronic disease. It highlights the need for federal guidelines that would help consumers set safe limits on their intake as well evidence-based regulatory strategies that would discourage excess sugar consumption at the population level.

Source: [JAMA](#) Network

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