

Invited Speaker Abstract

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Presenting Author & Affiliation:

Ashwell, Margaret
Ashwell Associates
Ashwell, SG7 5PZ
UK

Title of Presentation

Recommendations about intake of sugars and low calorie sweeteners: impact on obesity and diabetes epidemics

1. Abstract

To help the public to reduce energy intake for their health, authorities have proposed limiting 'free sugars' to 10, or even 5 per cent of total energy intake. 'Free sugars' include all monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit and vegetable juices and purees. Current intakes of 'free sugars' are well above these recommendations.

The use of low calorie sweeteners (LCS) is just one of the strategies to achieve these sugar goals. Groups of scientific experts have generated consensus statements, position papers, or other statements on LCS to show they are safe and effective. Many systematic reviews and meta-analyses have shown that LCS can help in reducing energy intake with implications for weight loss. Further, it is known that only small amounts of sustained weight loss are needed to reduce the risk of diabetes.

It is now acknowledged that central obesity is a potent risk factor for diabetes and that the prevalence of central obesity is increasing rapidly. Fortunately central obesity can be detected by a simple anthropometric measure: the waist to height ratio (WHtR). A simple cut off WHtR 0.5 has been proposed which is universally applicable to children and adults. Prevention of central obesity is therefore essential if we are to have any impact on the epidemics of obesity and diabetes

There is good evidence that the use of LCS can help to reduce obesity, including central obesity, or prevent it from increasing. Current UK government advice suggests low calorie drinks (i.e. those sweetened with LCS) as a suitable replacement for high sugar drinks. LCS consumption, as a means to limit 'free sugar' consumption, should be advocated more widely as one way to help to contain the epidemics of obesity and diabetes.

2. key references

Rogers PJ, Hogenkamp PS, de Graaf C et al. (2016) Does low-energy sweetener consumption affect energy intake and body weight? A systematic review, including meta-analyses, of the evidence from human and animal studies. *Int J Obes (Lond)* 40, 381-394.

Gibson S, Ashwell M, Arthur J et al. (2017) What can the food and drink industry do to help achieve the 5% free sugars goal? *Perspect Public Health* 137, 237-247.

Ashwell M, Gibson S, Bellisle F et al. (submitted) Expert consensus on low calorie sweeteners: facts, research gaps and suggested actions. *Nutrition Research Reviews*.

3. key messages

- Authorities have proposed limiting 'free sugars' to 10 or even 5% total energy intake.

- Many systematic reviews and meta-analyses have shown that low calorie sweeteners (LCS) can help in reducing energy intake with implications for increasing weight loss.
- Use of LCS to limit energy intake from 'free sugars' can help to prevent or reduce central obesity, a potent risk factor for diabetes.