

Sugar: sweet poison

There is no UK government health guideline for total sugars, the figure of 90g per day is used as a rule of thumb on labelling in Britain and across the EU. That 90g equates to more than 22 small (4g) teaspoons of sugar.

Packaging previously showed guideline daily amounts (GDA) for men, women and children but this has been replaced by reference intakes (RI) - which, under European legislation, can only be shown for adults. Reference intakes are not the same as dietary reference values (DRVs), which are what health professionals use when calculating added sugars – i.e. 10-11%.

National Diet and Nutrition Survey (NDNS) produced by Public Health England includes figures collected from 2014 to 2016, cited that sugar makes up **13.5% of 4 to 10-year-olds, and 14.1% of teenagers' (11 to 18-year-olds) daily calorie intake respectively.**

That's almost three times the recommended amount.

Sugary drinks are the main source of sugar. Sweets, chocolate and jams made up close to a quarter of children's sugar intake.

For adults aged 19-64, the main sources are confectionery, soft drinks and cereals. Alcohol is an additional source, of course!

A lot of people don't know that there seems to be a strong link between sugar and dementia. Obesity and diabetes are already proven to lead to a greater risk of developing Alzheimer's (some studies even suggest that Alzheimer's is late-stage diabetes). But even before developing diabetes, a sugar-heavy diet is linked to a decline in cognitive function.

Tips to cut down sugar:

- Cut down on food and drinks containing free sugar such as sweets, cakes, biscuits, chocolate, and some fizzy drinks and juice drinks.

- Go for water, lower-fat milk, or sugar-free, diet or no-added-sugar drinks.

- Even unsweetened fruit juices and smoothies are sugary, so limit the amount you have to no more than 150ml a day.

- If you prefer fizzy drinks, try diluting drinks with sparkling water.

- If you take sugar in hot drinks or add sugar to your breakfast cereal, gradually reduce the amount until you can cut it out altogether.

We all know it's not easy to cut down on sugar, but for the sake of your brain – try it!

References:

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