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Sweet Treats: How Sugar Consumption Affects Your Health

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Introduction

Excessive sugar consumption is a major contributor to health problems in our society. Sugar, in one form or another, can be found in many common food products, from breakfast cereal to salad dressing to ketchup. The U.S. Department of Agriculture states that, on a per capita basis, Americans consumed about 130 pounds of sugar in 2011.¹ In 2004, notes Statistics Canada, Canadians consumed about 110 grams of sugar (the equivalent of 26 teaspoons) each day.² A 2008 study published in the journal *Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews* may help explain these incredible numbers: Intermittent, excessive sugar consumption may lead to sugar addiction.³

Your chiropractor understands how sugar interacts with your body and can counsel you on how to limit your intake of sweets. Ask your chiropractor how you can overcome sugar addiction and take control of your health.

Obesity & Diabetes

Obesity and diabetes are two (often-related) health problems associated with excessive sugar consumption. Sugar is commonly consumed in the form of sugar-sweetened beverages,

such as soft drinks, energy drinks and other beverages. These drinks frequently contribute to weight gain and obesity. According to a 2001 study published in *The Lancet*, sugar-sweetened drink consumption is associated with childhood obesity.⁴ Another study, published in 2006 in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, reports that increased consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages causes weight gain and obesity and that public health measures should be implemented to discourage the intake of sugar-rich drinks as part of a healthy lifestyle.⁵

Excessive sugar consumption (especially in the form of sugar-sweetened beverages) leads to metabolic syndrome - a set of unfavorable health symptoms - and type 2 diabetes in many people. A 2010 article



QUESTION:

What are some of the health risks from too much sugar consumption?

- A) type 2 diabetes
- B) depression
- C) weight gain
- D) all of the above

ANSWER:

D) all of the above

TRUE OR FALSE:

Excessive sugar intake may also affect heart health

ANSWER:

True

QUESTION:

How much sugar did the average American consume in one year?

- A) 130 pounds
- B) 110 pounds
- C) 130 grams

ANSWER:

A 130 pounds (Dept of Agriculture report)

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published in the journal *Diabetes Care* confirms that, in addition to weight gain, greater intake of sugary drinks is indeed associated with metabolic syndrome and type 2 diabetes.⁶ Another study, published in 2004 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, reports that the excessive calories and large amounts of rapidly absorbable sugars associated with sugary drinks are linked to a greater degree of weight gain and a heightened risk for type 2 diabetes in young and middle-aged women.⁷

Cardiovascular Disease

Cardiovascular disease is a common health problem - and a leading cause of death - in our society. However, does sugar consumption play a role in the development of cardiovascular disease? The answer is yes, according to one study published in 2010 in the journal *Circulation*. The authors of this study



report that intake of added sugars among American adolescents is positively associated with several measures or markers known to boost cardiovascular disease risk.⁸ Another study published in 2009 in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* states that regular consumption of sugar-

sweetened beverages in women leads to a greater risk of coronary heart disease in this group, even after other dietary and lifestyle factors are accounted for.⁹

Tooth Decay

Sugar consumption, including the consumption of soft drinks, plays a significant role in tooth decay. According to a study published in 2009 in the *Journal of Zhejiang University*, the acids and sugars found in soft drinks may cause both dental caries (i.e., cavities) and enamel erosion.¹⁰ A study published in 2001 in the *Journal of Dental Education* states that controlling sugar consumption is one of the - if not *the* - most important aspects of preventing dental cavities.¹¹

Depression

Depression is a complex health problem that may be caused by many factors. One often overlooked factor may be excessive sugar consumption. According to a 2002 study published in the journal *Depression and Anxiety*, sugar consumption may directly affect the prevalence of major depression - a disorder characterized by bouts of low mood, low self-esteem and reduced interest in normally enjoyable activities.¹²

Your chiropractor can counsel you on how to use diet and nutrition to help balance your blood sugar levels, reduce your sweets cravings and reduce your risk for the health problems commonly associated with intermittent, excessive sugar consumption.

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