

Study reveals Australian children overdosing on sugar

19 October 2012, by Charis Palmer

More than half of young Australians are consuming too much sugar, according to a new study from researchers at the University of Wollongong and University of Sydney.

The research, which was presented at the annual congress of the Australia and New Zealand Obesity Society this week, found intake of "added" sugar increased as children got older, reaching an average daily intake of 22 teaspoons for boys aged 14-16.

Added sugars are those added to foods or beverages when they are processed, as distinct from sugars found naturally in food or drinks.

"While other reports suggest that total sugar consumption in Australian children may have declined slightly in recent times, this new work suggests that added [sugar intake](#) remains high," said Timothy Gill, research author and principal research fellow in the Institute of Obesity, Nutrition and Exercise at the University of Sydney.

"Research in this area is hindered in Australia because our food composition datasets do not currently distinguish between total and added sugars," Dr Gill said.

"This project was set up to help separate added from naturally occurring sugars in [food products](#) consumed in Australia."

The [World Health Organisation](#) recommends children receive no more than 10% of their energy from added sugars, however the research found [teenage boys](#) are actually getting about 13% of their sugar intake from added sugars.

Making a distinction between total and added sugars is becoming more important as experts look for a means of reducing [energy intake](#) to control weight and develop labelling to help guide consumer choice, said research author Jimmy

Louie, from the University of Wollongong.

"Products such as milk, fruit and certain [cereals](#) are high in natural sugars, as well as good sources of key nutrients, as opposed to most foods high in added sugars," Dr Louie said.

[Health experts](#) have welcomed the research, but are keen to see more on the direct contribution from [sugary drinks](#).

"It would be especially interesting to see what proportion of 'added sugars' came from liquids such as soft drinks, and what came from foods, as there is evidence that sugars consumed as part of watery liquids do not contribute to satiety and are simply added on to what would normally be consumed," said Kerin O'Dea, professor of population health and nutrition at the University of South Australia.

"Clearly sugar-sweetened soft drinks and cordials are still a problem and need to be dramatically reduced as they have no other nutrients – just unwanted calories," said Peter Clifton, laboratory head of nutritional interventions at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute and affiliate professor at the University of Adelaide.

"Nevertheless, focusing just on sugar is misplaced as for many children pizzas, pies, white bread and fast food are more of a problem than sugar, so the whole diet needs attention."

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