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A new study examined the trends in consumption of added sugars in the U.S. over the past decade. Although added sugar intake has decreased, it continues to exceed recommended limits.

CONSUMPTION OF ADDED SUGARS STILL EXCEEDS RECOMMENDED LIMITS, BUT IS DECREASING

Obesity, diabetes, heart disease and other maladies have been linked to consumption of an excess of added sugars (caloric sweeteners). Added sugars is defined as sugar added to a food or to sweeten a beverage (ie. sodas, fruit drinks, etc.). Since little is known about recent consumption trends in the U.S. and how intakes compare with current guidelines, researchers recently analyzed trends in intakes over the past decade.

A large cross-sectional study of 42,316 U.S. residents greater than 2 years of age was conducted by using dietary data from NHANES 1999–2008 (five 2-y cycles) and data for added-sugar contents from the MyPyramid Equivalents Database.

Average intakes of added sugars (grams and percentage of total energy intake) were calculated to obtain national estimates over time across age, sex, race and ethnic groups. Linear trends were also calculated.

Between 1999 and 2008, the total intake of added sugars decreased from an average of 100.1 grams/day to 76.7 grams/day. A decrease in soda consumption accounted for about 2/3 of the decrease in added sugar intake. Energy drinks were the only source of added sugars to increase over the study period, although the additional peak consumption was relatively slight at only 0.15 grams/day. Over the study period, the percentage of total energy intake from added sugars also decreased from 18.1% to 14.6%.

Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Dietary Guidelines for Americans in 2000, which recommended no more than 10 teaspoons (40 grams) of added sugar per day for a typical diet, has been adjusted recently to suggest that calories from solid fats and added sugars combined should be limited to no more than 5 to 15 percent of daily calorie intake. Even though the consumption of added sugars in the U.S. has decreased over the past decade, mainly due to a decrease in soda consumption, average intakes still exceed recommendations.

Jean A Welch et al. Consumption of added sugars is decreasing in the United States. Am J Clin Nutr August 2011 ajcn.018366.