

Friday 17th July 2015

SACN response statement

Sharon Fisher, Communications Manager, Making Sense of Sugar

"People are bombarded with differing advice on what to eat and drink, often leading to confusion. We welcome any guidance which helps inform policy-makers, particularly when it comes to helping people better understand what they eat and drink as part of a balanced diet. However, given that the scientific focus of the report was dietary carbohydrates and health outcomes in the round, we question whether the dietary recommendations which focus on one type of ingredient alone – sugars – will reduce levels of obesity, which remains a key focus for the UK

"According to the report's recommendations, consumers should halve their 'free' sugars intake while also significantly increasing their fibre intake, which is certainly a challenge. For example, anyone could easily find themselves over their daily 'free' sugars intake limit by lunchtime – so at breakfast, if you have anything more than a 150ml glass of orange juice and a regular 125g fruit-based yoghurt, then at lunch you consume a bowl of tomato soup you could well be over the limit. It will be interesting to see how this works in practice and translates into a consumer's daily diet.

"The challenge of tackling obesity is complex and, whilst helping people to be more aware of the calories they are consuming – whether through sugars or other types of ingredients – is important, focusing on one type of ingredient alone is not going to solve the issue. We believe people need to look at diet within the context of lifestyle, with the starting point being calories (energy) in and calories (energy) out.

Additional Information:

SACN recommends that adults increase their daily total intake of fibre to 30g/day. This too presents challenges in that many fibre containing foods also contain sugars. For example, 30g of fibre would equate to five portions of fruit, two slices of wholemeal bread, a portion of high fibre breakfast cereal, a baked potato and a portion of whole wheat pasta. Consuming these foods could take someone beyond today's recommended guidelines on 'total' sugars limit.

Definitions:

'Free' sugars: SACN (S.17 – Carbohydrates and Health report. Scientific Consultation, 17 July 2015) defines free sugars as all monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods by the manufacturer, cook or consumer, plus sugars naturally present in honey, syrups and unsweetened fruit juices. Under this definition lactose when naturally present in milk and milk products is excluded.

Total sugars: The European Food Safety Authority defines sugars as total sugars, including both indigenous (sugars naturally present in foods such as fruit, vegetables, cereals and lactose in milk products) and added sugars (EFSA, 2009). The term 'added sugars' refers to sucrose, fructose, glucose starch hydrolysates (glucose syrup, high-fructose syrup, isoglucose) and other isolated sugar preparations used as such, or added during food preparation and manufacturing.

The Reference Intake Amount of total sugars for an adult is 90g.



Katharine Teague, Head of Advocacy, AB Sugar

"We welcome the work of SACN and the experts who have contributed to the guidelines. However, we are concerned at the true value of the guidelines."

"It is important to remember, there is no silver bullet when it comes to tackling obesity and whilst helping people to be more aware of the calories they are consuming – whether through sugars or other types of ingredients - is important, we would urge policy-makers to be mindful of the unintended consequences of focusing on one type of ingredient in isolation. "For this reason, we suggest a holistic approach needs to be taken, one that includes a mixture of educational and regulatory measures. While it is up to the Government to decide how to implement today's recommendations, we suggest that a cross-departmental taskforce be explored in order to tackle the complex issue of obesity. We would urge policy-makers to further consider how this may work in practice to bring about a more integrated approach across government in tackling obesity."

"What's required is collaborative action to find real and workable solutions to the obesity crisis. We are committed to playing our part."