

Younger men biggest consumers of added sugars, CDC says

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Sweetened food and beverages are source of too many empty calories, experts say.

(HealthDay)—Young U.S. adults are consuming more added sugars in their food and drinks than older—and apparently wiser—folks, according to a new government report.

Released Wednesday, data from the U.S. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) showed that from 2005 to 2010, [older adults](#) with higher incomes tended to consume less added [sugar](#)—defined as sweeteners added to processed and prepared foods—than younger people.

Sugary [sodas](#) tend to bear the brunt of the blame for added sugar in the [American diet](#), but the new report showed that foods were the greater source. One-third of calories from added sugars came from beverages. Of note, most of those calories were consumed at home as opposed to outside of the house, the study showed.

The report, published in the May issue of the *National Center for Health Statistics Data Brief*, found that the number of calories derived from added sugar tended to decline with advancing age among both men and women. Those aged 60 and older consumed markedly fewer calories from this source than their counterparts aged 20 to 59.

Overall, about 13 percent of adults' total calories came from added sugars. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans advise that no more than 5 percent to 15 percent of calories stem from solid fats and added sugars combined.

That likely means that "most people continue to consume more food from this category that often does not provide the nutrition of other food groups," said registered dietitian Connie Diekman, director of university nutrition at Washington University in St. Louis.

"This report shows that efforts to educate Americans about healthful eating are still falling short," Diekman said.

The researchers found that men consumed more added sugar than women: 335 [calories per day](#) versus 239, respectively. There were also differences among racial and ethnic groups. For example, black adults consumed more calories from added sugar than did white or Mexican-American adults.

More than one-third of U.S. adults are currently obese, according to the CDC. Consuming too much sugar is linked to increased risk for weight gain and obesity.

"It looks like at least some groups are getting the message, but some still have a high intake of added sugar," said study author Dr. Bethene Ervin, a nutritional epidemiologist at the National Center for Health Statistics in Hyattsville, Md. "The message may be getting through to adults with higher income and education levels."

Still, Ervin said, this isn't good enough. "We need to make more efforts to reach specific groups that aren't making the changes as readily," she said. "These are empty [calories](#), so it would be wise to make healthier food choices."

Dr. David Lam, an endocrinologist at Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York City, agreed that there is tremendous room for improvement.

"We are on the higher end of the dietary recommendations for added sugar based on this data," he said. "We are seeing increases in obesity and diabetes, and these data tell us that we need to do a better job of limiting the added sugar in our diets."

This includes making healthy choices less expensive and more widely available, Lam said. "We are not where we need to be and we have to find things that we can change, such as increasing access to healthier foods," he said.

More information: Check out the full [U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#).

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