Sugar Reduction: The evidence for action

All Party Parliamentary Food and Health Forum
October 2015
Recommendations on sugar*

• The average population intake of sugar should not exceed 5% of total dietary energy for age groups from 2 years upwards.

• Consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs), by children and adults, should be minimised.

*Sugars added to food, naturally present in honey, syrups and fruit juice
What does SACN’s advice mean?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Grams</th>
<th>Sugar Cubes*</th>
<th>Teaspoons (4g – 6g in a teaspoon***)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 to 6 years</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 to 10 years</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4 - 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 years and above</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5 - 7</td>
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</tbody>
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* The size and weight of sugar cubes varies; a 4g (Silver Spoon) sugar cube has been used.
UK sugar intakes compared to the new SACN recommendation

UK sugar intake 2008/09 – 2010/11

% Total Energy

1.5-3 years
4-10 years
11-18 years
19-64 years
65+ years

Male
Female
Both
Main contributors to sugar intakes in the UK

Children aged 4 to 18 years

- breakfast cereals
- yoghurt, fromage frais, ice cream and other dairy desserts
- soft drinks
- fruit juice
- sugar and chocolate confectionery
- preserves and sweet spreads
- biscuits, buns, cakes, pastries and puddings
- table sugar
- other*

*other includes savoury sauces, baked beans, soups, powdered beverages and other minor sources

Adults aged 19 to 64 years

- breakfast cereals
- alcoholic drinks
- yoghurt, fromage frais, ice cream and other dairy desserts
- soft drinks
- fruit juice
- sugar and chocolate confectionery
- preserves and sweet spreads
- table sugar
- biscuits, buns, cakes, pastries and puddings
- other*
Cost savings of achieving the reduction to 5% of energy from sugar

Assuming the SACN recommendations to reduce sugar intakes to 5% of energy intake are achieved within 10 years, the cost saving to the NHS is estimated to be about £500M per annum by year 10 (due to reductions in the costs associated with dental caries and consequences of obesity).
Sugar reduction evidence package

Programme of work to assess evidence for various actions to reduce sugar intakes:

• **Marketing:** mixed methods evidence review of the impact of marketing high sugar foods and drinks on preferences, purchasing and consumption

• **Promotions:** analysis of the impact of promotions on purchasing behaviour

• **Fiscal measures:** mixed methods evidence review of the impact of taxes on high sugar foods and drinks on purchasing and consumption of high sugar foods and drinks

• **Food supply:** salt case study; reformulation scenario secondary analysis of NDNS data; portion size; sweetness literature review; fat/sugar seesaw

• **Knowledge, training and local action:** 5 A Day; eatwell review; AfN competency framework; local authority good practice; Change4Life
Mixed methods review - marketing

• Review of current literature and interviews with key informants on the impact of marketing targeted at high sugar food and non-alcoholic drinks. Most evidence is in children.

• Shortlisted 544 papers – 45 primary research studies included. Much of the evidence focuses on children.

• Primary research shows marketing is effective in influencing purchasing or consumption of high sugar food including through:
  • advertising (TV, print)
  • advergames
  • price discounting
  • end of aisle displays
  • cartoon/spokes characters
  • branding
  • product size

• Evidence is relatively consistent, but of moderate quality. Triangulation of data from primary research and interviews show consistency. More research is required for sponsorship, digital and online marketing (except advergaming).
Kantar Worldpanel purchasing data from last two years (from a continuously reporting panel of 30,000 British shoppers) was used to assess impact of promotions of high sugar foods on purchasing.

Promotions in Britain are highest in Europe, account for 40% of food and drink take home expenditure.

Promotions lead to expansion of all food and drinks categories, not just switching from one brand to another.

Promotions encourage people to buy and spend more overall - 22% more purchased as a result of promotions.

High sugar items are promoted more frequently and at a greater discount than non-high sugar items, but this does not seem to lead consumers to buy more than other categories.

Around 6% of the volume of sugar within high sugar products is additional as a consequence of promotions, and could, in theory, be prevented if promotions in higher sugar markets did not occur.
• Review of current literature (from 2010 onwards) and interviews with key informants on the impact of fiscal measures targeted at high sugar food and non-alcoholic drinks. Shortlisted 325 papers – 11 studies included in review (10 primary research, 1 grey lit.)

• Early sales data from five countries (Norway, Finland, Hungary, France and Mexico) show a reduction in sales of soft drinks/SSBs following implementation of the tax. A 10% tax on SSBs in Mexico resulted in an average reduction in purchases of 6% in 2014.

• Primary research (7 out of 8 studies) shows increasing prices may reduce purchases of high sugar foods and SSBs. Triangulation of data from primary research and interviews show consistency.

• All data are relatively consistent, suggesting taxes on high sugar foods and drinks reduce purchases, at least in the short term. However, the evidence is of moderate quality.

• The effect appears to be proportional to the size of the tax implemented. Modelling suggests taxes need to be set at a relatively high level (around 10% to 20%) to have an effect on purchases, consumption and population health.

• No evidence of the long term effects of sugar tax on the nutritional quality of the diet or health, or the impact on different population groups.
Work relevant to the food supply

- **Lessons learnt from salt** – Still more to do, but suggests a similar, voluntary, broad, structured programme with targets and rigorous monitoring and evaluation and proactive ‘name and praise’ should reduce sugar intake; considered within international context of food companies.

- **Portion size** – Suggests that a cap on portion sizes could be a way of reducing sugar and calorie intake. Limited evidence available on trends in portion sizes in UK.

- **Reformulation modelling** – Suggests that a 50% reduction in the average sugar content of key food groups would reduce mean sugar intake to about 9% of energy for adults (from 12%) and about 10% for teenagers and children (from around 15% for both groups).

- **Literature review of ‘sweetness’** – Suggests there is limited evidence as to whether approaches to sugar reduction should be focused on removing sugar with or without replacement with an artificial or intense sweetener.

- **Fat/sugar see saw** – Suggests that reducing the sugar content of foods would not necessarily result in an increased fat content.

- **Public sector food provision** – PHE catering guidance to help people meet government buying standards for food and catering services (GBSF) and those who wish to go further. Example menus suggest that the SACN sugar and fibre recommendations are achievable.
Key Change4Life messages:

- Sugary drinks have no place in a child's daily diet.
- Swap to water, lower fat milks, sugar free, diet and no added sugar drinks instead.

Continuation of Change4Life messaging to increase consumer awareness and improving diets towards achieving the recommendations
Summary

Evidence suggests the following levers could be successful:

1) Reduce and rebalance the number and type of price promotions in all retail outlets including supermarkets and convenience stores and the out of home sector (including restaurants, cafes and takeaways)

2) Significantly reduce opportunities to market and advertise high sugar food and drink products to children and adults across all media including digital platforms and through sponsorship

3) The setting of a clear definition for high sugar foods to aid with actions 1 and 2 above. Currently the only regulatory framework for doing this is via the Ofcom nutrient profiling model, which would benefit from being reviewed and strengthened

4) Introduction of a broad, structured and transparently monitored programme of gradual sugar reduction in everyday food and drink products, combined with reductions in portion size
5) Introduction of a **price increase of a minimum of 10-20%** on high sugar products through the use of a tax or levy such as on **full sugar soft drinks**, based on the emerging evidence of the impact of such measures in other countries.

6) Adopt, implement and monitor the government buying standards for food and catering services (GBSF) **across the public sector, including national and local government and the NHS** to ensure provision and sale of healthier food and drinks in hospitals, leisure centres etc.

7) Ensure that accredited training in diet and health is routinely delivered to all of those who have opportunities to influence food choices in the **catering, fitness and leisure sectors** and others within local authorities.

8) Continue to raise awareness of concerns around sugar levels in the diet to the public as well as health professionals, employers, the food industry etc., encourage action to reduce intakes and **provide practical steps to help people lower their own and their families sugar intake**.
It is unlikely that a single action alone would be effective in reducing sugar intakes

• The evidence suggests a broad, structured approach, involving restrictions on price promotions and marketing, product reformulation, portion size reduction and price increase on unhealthy products, implemented in parallel, is likely to have a more universal effect.

• Positive changes to the food environment (e.g. public sector food procurement, provision and sales of healthier foods) as well as information and education are also needed to help support people in making healthier choices.
YOU CAN LUMP IT
Report: PM must tax sugar to beat obesity crisis

SUGAR TAX COULD HELP SAVE 80,000 LIVES

MINISTERS have bowed to pressure and released an official report calling for a tax of up to 20 per cent on sugary drinks and foods.

The study by Public Health England closed rules which ban the use of exist-

A tax alone won’t curb the nation’s sugar addiction

How Percy Pig and friends target children: Report finds firms use popular characters to market sugar-laden products

It’s official: we do need a sugar tax

- Review that the Government tried to suppress is finally published
- Case for fiscal action to protect children and curb obesity is unanswerable

The bitter truth of our sugar addiction

‘Hidden’ study says we should halve intake
Experts suggest new tax of 10-20%
Changes could save NHS £14billion

There’s no way to sugar this pill. The government must act now.