



## Latest research challenges myths about sugars and health

BRUSSELS (February 10, 2009) – A new scientific review on the role of sugars in human health and nutrition clarifies some misconceptions about the impact of sugars on health. Published today in *Obesity Reviews*, “*the results provide a much needed update of the overall scientific evidence on sugars and suggest that new randomized controlled intervention studies of sufficient size and duration are required, and including new nutrigenomic technologies, to help setting up more precise figures for macronutrient intake recommendations to the general population and to specific subpopulations*” says Professor Andreu Palou who chaired the expert workshop that looked at the current available scientific evidence.

The combined impact of many dietary and lifestyle factors such as physical activity, excessive calorie intake and weight gain, and their interactions, have to be taken into account. Obesity and low physical activity are causally related to the development of insulin resistance and its progression towards type 2 diabetes. There is convincing evidence from randomized controlled trials (RCT) that weight loss and moderate physical activity are beneficial in improving insulin sensitivity and preventing type 2 diabetes.

A limited number of randomised controlled trials that have directly compared sugar-sweetened drinks (SSD) with artificially sweetened drinks show a tendency for body weight gain with SSD supplementation. However, the results are equivocal and more RCTs of sufficient size and duration are clearly required in this area to support the data from epidemiological studies.

In contrast to the simpler or popular belief that sugar makes you fat, today’s evidence shows that replacing sugar with other sources of carbohydrates does not make you lose weight necessarily. What appears more important is the total amount of energy intake, the energy density of the foods and the quality of the diet.

The evidence shows that added sugars do not necessarily compromise a person’s intake of micronutrients. The “micronutrient dilution” myth that eating added sugars dilutes the nutrient density of a person’s diet appears mostly due to misreporting and methodological constraints.

Finally, although sugar consumption has traditionally been associated with poor dental health, the experts pointed out the importance of the frequency, more than the amount, of consumption of all sugars and fermentable carbohydrates. Nowadays, for the prevention of tooth decay, the widespread use of fluoridated toothpaste and good oral hygiene play a more important role.

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## **REFERENCE**

Central aspects of sugars in human nutrition. *Obesity Reviews* Volume 10, Supplement 1, 2009.

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## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

CEFS is the Comité Européen des Fabricants de Sucre. CEFS represents and defends the interests of all European sugar manufacturers and refiners among the European Institutions and among different international organisations. Further information: [www.cefs.org](http://www.cefs.org)

A scientific expert workshop 'On the role and fate of sugars in human nutrition and health' was organised in September 2007. The aim was to critically review the available evidence on the role of sugars in human health and nutrition, focusing on controversial aspects and research needs. Particular attention was paid to the quality of the scientific evidence and to identifying areas where further research is required. The following topics were systematically reviewed and published together in a supplement: a) overweight and obesity; b) insulin resistance and diabetes; c) dental caries; and d) micronutrient dilution.