

The Sweet Dementia of Sugar

The facts are well known relating sugar, obesity and diabetes, but there are new studies that suggest an increase in cognitive decline with increased blood sugar. The study not only relates the corresponding decrease in memory with increased sugar intake, but the findings suggest that the cognitive decline develops over time as a result of ongoing dietary sugar intake.

Tie this data into the startling fact that sugar consumption in the US has increased tremendously. It was approximately 80 years ago that the average intake of sugar per person was in the neighborhood of 20 - 40 lbs per year. Today that number has skyrocketed to about 150 lbs per year. The amount of high fructose corn syrup, a significant dietary contribution to diabetes regardless of food industry denial, has increased over 1000% since 1970.

Researchers report that there may be either a link or a potentiating relationship between diabetes and Alzheimer's disease processes. Certainly you would expect that the vascular-impairing effects of diabetes might impact the circulatory system around the brain at some point.

However, this study of close to 3,000 older volunteers suggests that impairment begins even before the diagnosis of diabetes can be made. An outright case of Alzheimer's disease becomes two to three times more likely if you've been diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. This research suggests that the risk of cognitive impairment should be thought of as more of a continuum of sugar metabolic function, not just whether or not the patient has crossed some diagnostic threshold.

These findings ultimately confirm and reinforce not only the detrimental effects of our ever worsening dietary habits, but more important, the need to pay critical attention to our childrens' essential nutrition. We can't expect this problem to change until we enforce new habits for our young!

-Associated Press, March 17, 2009

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