

Food quality depends on more than calories

By ACSH Staff — August 19, 2013



[1]In our obesity-obsessed country, people may be forgiven for using

primarily calorie content for choosing which foods to consume. In addition, there are certain bad ingredients such as saturated fats and added sugars that we are told to minimize. However, a new [analysis](#) [2] of dietary intake data by Dr. Peter J. Huth and colleagues points out that some foods that are calorie-rich and do contain some of those ingredients are actually nutrient-rich and should not be consigned to the avoid at all costs category.

In their study, published in *Nutrition Journal*, these investigators examined 24-hour dietary intake data from the 2003-2006 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES). Data was collected from 16,822 persons over 2 years of age.

While no one food category (such as vegetables, meats, or dairy) provided more than 7.2 percent of calories to the diet, five out of the ten largest calorie providers also contributed at least ten percent or more of the total dietary fiber and vitamins and minerals. They also found that milk, beef and cheese, three of the top ten contributors of calorie and saturated fats, provided much of the calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12. Further, poultry, beef, cheese and milk together contribute nearly half of total daily protein, but less than 20 percent of total daily calories.

On the other hand, desserts, snacks or beverages provided nearly one-seventh of total calories as well as over four-fifths of added sugar, but little or no other nutrients.

In their discussion, the authors stated Reduction of total calorie intake for weight loss requires a broad and balanced approach because no one food category makes a large impact on total calories. But, the present analysis reveals soft drinks, soda, candy, sugars and sugary foods, and alcoholic beverages contribute 13.6% of total calorie intake and provide little to no other nutritional value. Reducing intake of these foods could greatly reduce population caloric intake without compromising the overall nutritional quality of the diet.

ACSH s Dr. Ruth Kava agreed, The concept of empty calories should be taken into account when we select our foods, and this is obviously especially important for those who want to decrease their weight while obtaining necessary nutrients.

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2013/08/19/food-quality-depends-on-more-than-calories>

Links

[1] http://acsh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/myplate_blue.jpg

[2] <http://www.nutritionj.com/content/12/1/116/>