As momma used to say, Too much of anything is no good for you. This has been confirmed again, in a new study [1] just published in *JAMA Internal Medicine*. In a report based on several national surveys, Dr. Quanhe Yang from the CDC and colleagues examined the association of added sugar consumption and the rate of mortality from cardiovascular disease.

The researchers used data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) from 1988-94, 1999-2004, and 2005-10 to examine trends in consumption of added sugar by Americans. By added sugar they included any sugar added to foods during preparation or processing. They also used a linked, prospective study of mortality (1988-2006) to investigate the association of added sugar consumption and mortality.

In the earliest survey (1988-94) the percent of daily calories from added sugar was 16 percent. This increased to 17 percent by the second survey, and then decreased to 15 percent by the 2005-10 survey. Further, Dr. Yang and colleagues compared people who consumed less than 10 percent of calories from added sugar to those who consumed 10 to 24.9 percent or over 25 percent. They found that the risk of mortality was increased by 30 and 175 percent respectively.

Thus, there was a highly significant relationship between high consumption of added sugars and increased risk of mortality. The authors also concluded Most US adults consume more added sugar than is recommended for a healthy diet. But it is not clear what that level should be different authorities suggest different upper limits. The Institute of Medicine, for example, recommends a limit of 25 percent of total calories, while the World Health Organization suggests an upper limit of 10 percent.

In an invited accompanying editorial, Dr. Laura A. Schmidt from the University of San Francisco urges the imposition of taxes on sugar sweetened beverages (SSBs), since, she says, they are by far the single largest source of added sugar in the American diet.

But ACSH’s Dr. Elizabeth Whelan disagrees: While SSBs may contribute excess sugar to some
Americans diets, they are certainly not the only sources. The focus should be on excess, not just sugar. And even if taxation lowered consumption by some individuals, that doesn’t mean they can’t or won’t add more sugars to other dietary components. No, the way to fight excess consumption is education, not taxation.

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