

From: mjacobson@cspinet.org [mailto:mjacobson@cspinet.org]

Sent: Monday, 10 June 2002 17:30

To: waxmana

Subject: RE:

Dear Amalia,

I've asked a dental professor to give me some advice on the sugar/caries section. I would like to second Geoffrey's point that sugar is a problem with matters other than dental caries, at least in industrialized nations (in the U.S., caries has declined by 50% or so in the past 30 years, while sugar consumption has increased significantly).

A major concern is not the sugar per se, but the increasing role that sugary foods play in the diet -- and displace more healthful foods. I think that industry has distracted attention from that larger matter by focusing on the sugar instead of the sugary foods. The most obvious example is that soft drinks are displacing water, milk, etc. Our report on soft drinks ([http://www.cspinet.org/sodapop/liquid\\_candy.htm](http://www.cspinet.org/sodapop/liquid_candy.htm)) discusses this in detail. The nutrients that sugary foods may displace are ones that could be helping prevent cancer, obesity, heart disease, etc. Also, it is worth reading research by Richard Mattes and his colleagues that finds that liquid sources of calories, such as soft drinks, are more conducive to obesity than solid sources, like meat.

CSPI has petitioned the FDA for labeling of refined sugars in packaged foods (currently, only total sugars is listed). Our petition examines some of the nutritional considerations. (<http://www.cspinet.org/reports/sugar/sugarpet1.pdf>)

I know that WHO scientists like to focus exclusively on peer-reviewed papers, but I think that the two documents above offer a useful perspective from which to interpret the literature.

Sincerely,  
Michael Jacobson

15 April 2002

Dr. Derek Yach  
Executive Director for Non-Communicable Diseases  
and Mental Health  
World Health Organization  
20 Avenue Appia  
Geneva 27  
Switzerland

Dear Dr. Yach:

Re: Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation on Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases

We wish to support efforts by the World Health Organization (WHO) to reduce the global burden of chronic disease caused by unhealthy diets and a lack of physical activity. Poor diets coupled with a sedentary lifestyle needlessly increase the rate of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, osteoporosis, obesity and dental disease. The costs to society, in terms of premature death, disabilities, health care expenses, and lost productivity, are enormous.

We understand that a Joint WHO/FAO Expert Consultation is developing recommendations to civil society, national governments, and the food industry to help promote health through better nutrition and increases in physical activity in both developed and developing countries. We urge that the following policy recommendations be issued:

- Food Labeling and Advertising
  1. Restrict advertising of high-calorie, low-nutrient foods on television programming commonly viewed by significant numbers of children;
  2. Require food labels to provide simple symbols to enable consumers to identify healthy foods and provide more detailed information about calorie, saturated fat, trans fat, and added sugars content;
  3. Require fast food and other chain restaurants to provide nutrition information, including calorie content on menus and menu boards as well as more complete nutrition and ingredient information on food wrappers, containers, and in brochures.
  
- Fiscal Policies
  1. Establish taxes on soft drinks or other foods high in calories, saturated or trans

2. fat, or added sugars to fund campaigns and other programs to promote good nutrition and physical activity or to subsidize the cost of nutritious foods;
  3. Remove taxes on the purchase of exercise equipment, weight management programs and other products and services that have been demonstrated to improve nutritional habits and increase physical activity.
- Schools
    1. Set nutrition standards for all foods and meals served in schools;
    2. Require schools to provide ample nutrition and physical education;
    3. Require that educational materials supplied by industry or that contain advertising, be scrutinized carefully and used only if they present unbiased educational information.
  - Educational Programs
    1. Provide funding for mass media campaigns that promote good nutrition and physical activity;
    2. Require instruction in nutrition and weight management in health professional, medical, and teaching curriculums;
    3. Develop culturally appropriate nutrition and physical activity programs for population sub-groups that are at particular risk of chronic disease related to dietary patterns.
  - Physical Activity
    1. Promote mass transit, bicycling, walking, and other modes of transportation that involve physical activity;
    2. Build or strengthen infrastructures for safe, attractive places for people to engage in physical activity (bicycle lanes, recreational facilities, running paths in parks, etc).
  - Research
    1. Develop and fund a research agenda focusing on behavioral determinants of poor dietary patterns, including the impact of marketing practices;
    2. Develop and fund research on cost-effective methods for promoting healthy lifestyles including dietary modifications and increases in physical activity.

We hope that that these recommendations can be taken into account and included in the publication of the final report.

Sincerely,

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