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Changes in children's intakes and sources of free sugars since 1997

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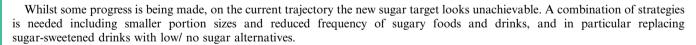
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Meeting the target of 5% energy from free sugars is highly challenging given that present intakes are three times this level in children⁽¹⁾. Understanding the trends in intake may help in designing more effective strategies for sugars reduction. Free sugars intakes and sources among children aged 4–18 y were compared between 1997 NDNS (n1688) and NDNS 2008–2012 (n1687) by analysing original dietary records obtained from the UK Data Service https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/. Non-milk extrinsic sugars (NMES) was used as proxy for free sugars. Means were compared using non-parametric (Mann Whitney) tests.

Mean intakes of free sugars (% energy) among 4–18y olds fell by 10% (1·7 percentage points) between 1997 and 2008–2012 (mean 16·8% vs. 15·1%) P < 0.001), with a larger fall of 15% among 4–10y olds (mean 17·4% vs. 14·7%, P < 0.001). Absolute intake fell from 73·2 g to 60·9 g among 4–10y and from 81·6 g to 74·6 g among 11–18y olds (P < 0.001). Many foods contributed to the reduction in NMES, but notably among 4–10y, there were reductions in confectionery (-6·1 g NMES) and sugar-sweetened soft drinks (-5·6 g), partly offset by a rise in fruit juice (+4·1 g). Among 11–18y olds there were significant decreases in sugar from confectionery (-5·8 g), table sugar and spreads (-2·5 g) and cakes (-2·0 g), and a small rise in fruit juice (+2·5 g), but no significant change in sugar from soft drinks (+1·4 g).

NMES g/day from source		4–10 years			11-18 years			Total 4–18 years		
g,		1997	2008-12	P value	1997	2008-12	P value	1997	2008-12	P value
	N	835	803		853	884		1688	1687	
Soft drinks	Mean	16.8	11.2	< 0.001	23.6	24.9	0.412	20.2	18.8	< 0.001
Fruit juice	Mean	4.7	8.8	< 0.001	5.3	7.8	0.002	5	8.2	< 0.001
Chocolate confectionery	Mean	7.8	4.7	< 0.001	10.3	6.4	< 0.001	9.1	5.6	< 0.001
Sugar confectionery	Mean	8.2	5.1	< 0.001	6.3	4.4	< 0.001	7.2	4.7	< 0.001
Sugar and spreads	Mean	5.8	4.6	< 0.001	8.6	6.1	< 0.001	7.2	5.4	< 0.001
Cakes & pastries	Mean	6	5.1	0.04	5.7	3.8	< 0.001	5.9	4.4	< 0.001
Biscuits	Mean	5.8	4.4	< 0.001	4.7	4.7	0.001	5.2	4.6	< 0.001
Breakfast cereals	Mean	5.8	4.0	0.002	5.3	3.8	< 0.001	5.5	3.9	< 0.001
Puddings & ice cream	Mean	4.4	3.8	0.005	3.4	2.6	<0.001	3.9	3.1	<0.001
NMES from all food/ drink	Mean	73.2	60.9	<0.001	81.6	74-6	0.001	77.4	68.5	< 0.001
	SE	1	1.5		1.4	2		0.8	1.3	
% Energy from NMES	Mean	17.4	14.7	< 0.001	16.2	15.4	0.002	16.8	15.1	< 0.001
	SE	0.2	0.3		0.2	0.3		0.1	0.2	



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1. Public Health England (2015) Sugar Reduction: The evidence for action. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/sugar-reduction-from-evidence-into-action (accessed August 2016).

