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## Sweet truths: Eating sugar may not make you fat

A new Australian study has found that although sugar has been blamed as the 'root of all evil' in the worldwide obesity crisis it may not be the real culprit.

In the United States sugar consumption has gone up in line with American's expanding waistlines, so sugar has been blamed for the weight gain. But local researchers have found that the same cannot be said for Australia.

Dr Alan Barclay, who is addressing the Dietitians Association of Australia's (DAA) National Conference in Melbourne this week, and co-researcher Alicia Sim, looked at the relationship between total fructose (a type of sugar) consumption and rates of overweight and obesity in Australia since the early 1970s. They also gathered similar data for the United Kingdom and Japan.

According to Dr Barclay, consumption of fructose has decreased by nearly 20 per cent in Australia since the early 1970s, while overweight and obesity has doubled.

'Much to everyone's surprise, it looks as if, unlike in the US, sugar is not the culprit here – or in the UK or Japan,' said Dr Barclay.

Some research has suggested fructose promotes fat production in the body, while other studies report it tricks people into thinking they are hungrier than they really are. But Dr Barclay said many of these studies have only been done in animals, and those animals have usually been fed very large amounts of fructose – far more than the average Australian would typically consume.

'Overweight and obesity is a huge problem in Australia and in most other developed countries. Sixty two per cent or more than 13 million Australian adults are overweight or obese. And one in four children carry too much weight for their height, which is working their hearts and organs way too hard.' said Dr Barclay.

He said this research is crucial because efforts to address this issue must be put into the most effective strategies for reducing Australia's obesity crisis.

DAA Spokesperson and Accredited Practising Dietitian Lisa Renn said Australians need to focus on eating fewer kilojoules and watching portion sizes.

'We gain weight when we eat more energy, or kilojoules, than we use up through exercise or activity. Obesity isn't caused by any one food alone – you'll gain weight by eating too much of any food. But it's wise to still only eat moderate amounts of those foods that are low in nutrition, but high in added sugar,' said Ms Renn.

**For further information or to organise an interview contact Maree Garside,  
Dietitians Association of Australia on 0408 482 581.**

**Note to Editors:** The Dietitians Association of Australia (DAA) is the professional body representing dietitians nationally. Accredited Practising Dietitian (APD) is the only national credential recognised by the Australian Government, Medicare, the Department of Veterans Affairs and most private health funds as the quality standard for nutrition and dietetics services in Australia. For more information visit [www.daa.asn.au](http://www.daa.asn.au)

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### Background

- The DAA National Conference is being held from May 27-29 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre. For more information and program details, visit the conference link on the DAA website at [www.daa.asn.au](http://www.daa.asn.au)