Sweets And Weight Loss

Many people believe sweets are the culprit in obesity. That's another myth. If you have a sweet tooth and are overweight, it might well be a coincidence. The evidence: When researchers take sweets away from overweight people, they don't stop eating; they just overeat nonsweets, trying to satisfy their innate fat craving. Losing weight is a complex undertaking, but it's important to put first things first. The most important tasks in weight loss are to cut back on fat; to eat complex carbohydrates, which are high in fiber;to increase exercise; and to reduce calories to a reasonable level (300 to 500 calories less than recommended intake for your height and weight). Dealing with a sweet craving is usually not a major task in weight loss, but it is one that can make a significant difference to maintaining weight loss. If you can follow the "sugar straight up" rule and have your sugar in a nonfatty form, in moderate amounts, it should not impede weight loss. However, a few people find that sugar stimulates their appetite. If you find that eating sweets makes you hungrier, it's wiser to avoid them.

What about desserts and soft drinks sweetened with nonnutrient sweeteners like aspartame? Can they aid a weight loss program? Research at our weight loss clinic at the New England Deaconess Hospital indicates that non nutrient sweeteners can make a small, positive difference to dieters. A study we conducted in 1988 (which, it should be noted, was supported by grants from the NutraSweet Company as well as the National Institutes of Health) looked at whether artificially sweetened foods and bever ages affect weight loss. Fifty nine obese women and men (but mostly women) were put on a low fat, calorie reduced diet, about 1,000 calories a day for the women and 1,200 calories daily for the men. Emphasis was on low-fat foods, and there was also an exercise component and training in behavioral modification. Half the people were encouraged to consume nonnurient sweetened foods-at least two daily-containing as partame. They chose offerings like puddings, soft drinks, and frozen desserts. The other group was told to avoid use of all aspartame or saccharine-sweetened products, and were given food guides on low calorie snacks and beverages free of nonnutrient sweeteners.

Both groups lost weight. After 12 weeks, the women who were permitted to eat nonnutrient sweeteners had lost 3.7 more pounds than women in the other group, a difference that is not statistically significant but does indicate that nonnutrient artificial sweeteners aren't a disadvantage to dieters, and might provide a small advantage. It should be emphasized that both groups not only lost weight but enjoyed improvements in their health and quality of life. That's not because of sweets or lack of them; it's bccause they were on a balanced program with group support, behavioral training, exercise, and close monitoring. I'd say the nonnutrient sweeteners provided a small additional advantage for two reasons. First, those sweeteners contain fewer calories than sugar. And second, the people eating the sweetened products may have felt less deprived and more satisfied because they could eat more desserts. There has been great controversy over whether non nutrient sweeteners are safe. They've been the subject of what are probably the most intensive Food and Drug Administration investigations of any food product. Since they've passed these tests, they don't pose a health threat. My view is that there are other things the public should worry about, like fat in the diet, before they worry about the health impact of moderate amounts of nonnutrient sweeteners.

About the Author

For more information on diabetes types, refer authors site. There are mainly two types of diabetes - Type 1 Diabetes abd Type 2 Diabetes.

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