Cutting Out Foods With Added Sugar Can Improve the Health of Obese Kids

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Does sugar harm our health, or is it the weight gain caused by consuming this sweetener long-term that's so bad for our bodies? New findings published in the journal Obesity suggest that children who cut back on their sugar intake for just 10 days can see drastic improvements in their metabolic health even without losing weight, The New York Times reports.

For the study, scientists recruited 43 children between ages 9 and 18 who were considered to be at a "high risk" of developing diabetes. All of the kids were either African American or Latino, obese, and suffering from one or more symptoms of metabolic syndrome, such as hypertension, high blood sugar, abnormal cholesterol and excessive body fat around their waist.

Next, scientists paired each child with a dietician, who replaced sweetened foods in their diets with other carbohydrates. For example, dieticians replaced sugar-sweetened yogurt with bagels and pastries with baked potato chips (this ensured that each kid's overall calorie intake remained the same as before).

Findings showed that after 10 days, every one of the children saw dramatic improvements to their health even though they lost little to no weight during the study. Specifically, researchers said that the kids' LDL cholesterol (the bad cholesterol), blood pressure, triglyceride and fasting blood sugar levels, and insulin control drastically improved after they stopped eating foods with added sugar.

Scientists said the study is particularly important because the findings add legitimacy to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's recent recommendation that children limit their intake of added sugars to no more than 10 percent of daily calories.

For tips on how to cut sugar out of your diet, click here.

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