



Nutrition Corner:

High Fructose Corn Syrup: A Recipe for Hypertension

Source: American Society of Nephrology

A diet high in fructose increases the risk of developing high blood pressure (hypertension), according to a paper being presented at the American Society of Nephrology's 42nd Annual Meeting and Scientific Exposition in San Diego, California. The findings suggest that cutting back on processed foods and beverages that contain high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) may help prevent hypertension.

Over the last 200 years, the rate of fructose intake has directly paralleled the increasing rate of obesity, which has increased sharply in the last 20 years since the introduction of HFCS. Today, Americans consume 30% more fructose than 20 years ago and up to four times more than 100 years ago, when obesity rates were less than 5%. While this increase mirrors the dramatic rise in the prevalence of hypertension, studies have been inconsistent in linking excess fructose in the diet to hypertension.

Diana Jalal, MD (University of Colorado Denver Health Sciences Center), and her colleagues studied the issue in a large representative population of US adults. They examined 4,528 adults 18 years of age or older with no prior history of hypertension. Fructose intake was calculated based on a dietary

questionnaire, and foods such as fruit juices, soft drinks, bakery products, and candy were included. Dr. Jalal's team found that people who ate or drank more than 74 grams per day of fructose (2.5 sugary soft drinks per day) increased their risk of developing hypertension. Specifically, a diet of more than 74 grams per day of fructose led to a 28%, 36%, and 87% higher risk for blood pressure levels of 135/85, 140/90, and 160/100 mmHg, respectively. (A normal blood pressure reading is below 120/80 mmHg.)

"These results indicate that high fructose intake in the form of added sugars is significantly and independently associated with higher blood pressure levels in the US adult population with no previous history of hypertension," the authors concluded. Additional studies are needed to see if low fructose diets can normalize blood pressure and prevent the development of hypertension.

