

Processed Sugar Diet During Pregnancy Increases Asthma Risk in Children



Women who consume lots of sugar during pregnancy may increase the risk for asthma in their children, researchers report. Previous studies have suggested that poor diet and obesity are linked to the current increases in childhood asthma. This new [study, in the Annals of the American Thoracic Society](#), implicates sugary drinks and synthetic fructose.

Harvard researchers studied 1,068 mothers in eastern Massachusetts, gathering diet information during their pregnancies. They checked children's diet and asthma diagnoses at ages 3 and 7. About half of the fructose intake of both mothers and children came from sweetened drinks and fruit juice.

Compared with the children of women who consumed the least sugar — an average of 21 grams a day — the children of those who had the most — 46 grams a day — had a 58 percent higher risk for asthma. (A 12-ounce can of Coca-Cola contains 39 grams of sugar.) The researchers controlled for maternal education, smoking and pre-pregnancy body mass index, as well as for the child's B.M.I., age, sex and race.

A lead author, Sheryl L. Rifas-Shiman, of the department of Population Medicine at Harvard Medical School, said that the mechanism for the association remains unknown



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