Is Sugar The New Tobacco ?

Sugar In New Era : Yin Or Yang

Introduction

Dental caries caused by high consumption of processed sugar is not a new malignancy yet it appears to be new. Although, sugar in moderation does not cause any harm, but in excess it literally drains the calcium out of a human's tooth making it more vulnerable to caries.

Pictorial Representation

Theoretical Presentation

Overconsumption of sugar-dense foods and beverages is often compared to drug addiction. In fact, in many ways, sugar is as or more addictive than cocaine. While it may be surprising, but this is because of the abnormally high stimulation of two protein receptors (on tongue), evolved in ancestral times, by sugar-rich diets generate excessive reward signals in the brain, which have the potential to override normal self-control mechanisms, and thus lead to addiction.^[1]

Today, Indian sugar industry's annual output is worth Rs. 80,000 crores.^[2] While sugar production has reached its zenith, its consumption is no less due to its easy availability. In the last 50 years, sugar consumption in India has gone up from 5% to 13% of sugar produced globally. And its consumption in India is likely to reach 29.35 million tonnes by 2019-20 from the current level of about 26 million tonnes, according to a study by the Associated Chamber of Commerce and Industry of India.

On average, an Indian consumes 10.2 kg/year (14 teaspoons a day) of sugar while the recommended value of sugar by WHO is somewhere around 9-14 kg/year (6 teaspoons for females and 10 teaspoons for males a day) of sugar.^[3]

During religious festivals, the sugar consumption in India spikes by 60% - 80%, with an appropriate increase of 200 percent in the average of sweets.

Indian sweet may be seasonal but chocolates are self-medicated substances of all time stress disorder. Chocolates consumption always go along with cravings, enjoyment and pleasure. But, being cariogenic, its consumption has always been associated with dental caries.

Pictorial Realization of Most Common Form of Sugar Consumption

Graphical Presentation

Average Domestic Sugar Prices have been falling

Indian sugar prices amongst the lowest in the world

Conclusion

Information displayed in this poster may be sufficient to show the worrisome trends in the sugar consumption in India. It also explains why it is hard to control the increasing trend of sugar consumption. It can, thus, be concluded with continuous high exposure of sugar, especially during festival time, it is difficult for a person to avoid sweet offering due to emotions that heightens up during festivals and it is extremely important for the government and society to take steps to reduce its consumption.

Action Plan

While the Indian government is planning stronger measures including higher taxes and stricter advertisements norms to regulate sale of sugar-sweetened beverages, public awareness in this subject is limited and steps need to be taken to promote dental health education and limit availability of sweets and processed sugar. There is also a need for personal and social intervention of individuals and it is important to ensure that rural areas are not to be left behind. Moreover, along with sugar-free chewing gums, a healthy replacement of chocolates is must especially for the family doctors who often distribute it.

References

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