



Can you believe that nearly 40% of the calories consumed by 2 to 8-year-olds is "empty" calories—those from solid fats and added sugars? That is what a new study conducted by The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Health and Nutrition Survey, which gathered information on the diets of over 14,000 children found. Half of those empty calories come from added sugars and solid fats and in primarily 6 sources: soda, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, grain desserts, pizza and whole milk.

Not My Kids! Consuming Empty Calories

Over the past 3 decades, childhood obesity rates in America have tripled. Today, nearly 1 in 3 children nationwide is overweight or obese, which increases the likelihood of developing diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and asthma.

The growing weight problems of our nation's children stem from

a combination of greater energy consumption (counted in calories) and less physical activity. The solution to childhood obesity will involve changes in both diet and physical activity. The best way to cut energy intake is to limit unnecessary empty calories.



Pediatric cardiologist, Dr. Rae-Ellen Kavey, University of Rochester Medical Center, writes, "High added sugar consumption which occurs most commonly in the form of sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with a constellation of cardiovascular risk factors..."

Studies have shown that interventions can successfully help children change their diets. But the researchers emphasize the importance of reducing the number of empty calories in the food supply in the first place. "It's unreasonable to expect people to be able to change their eating behaviors when so many forces in the environment conspire against making healthy choices," Drs. Jill Reedy of NIH's National Cancer Institute (NCI) says. These findings suggest that sugar-sweetened drinks should be a major target of efforts to improve our children's health.

Don't assume that because you limit the intake of junk-food in your home, doesn't mean that your kids aren't the ones consuming empty calories. Consider all the sources, school and after-school programs, sporting events, social activities, clubs, parties, holiday celebrations and "special treats", your **kids may be eating more empty calories** than you think! Maybe it's time to define what "anything in moderation" really means. A little bit here and a little bit there, significantly adds to obesity rates.