

NAFLD

Sugary drinks and fatty liver —a bitter-sweet relationship

Unlike diet beverages (with no added sugar), regular consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) has been found to associate with the presence of NAFLD, according to research published in the *Journal of Hepatology*.

“Sweetened beverage intake is the largest contributor to added sugar intake in the USA, and epidemiological evidence suggests that high intakes of SSB are associated with obesity and type 2 diabetes,” says corresponding author Nicola McKeown. Previous studies from the group have identified a connection between SSB and an abnormal metabolic phenotype. “As a natural transition from this work, we were interested in examining the relationship between SSB consumption and fat accumulation in ectopic depots; for example, visceral adipose tissue and liver,” explains McKeown.

In a cross-sectional study, the Framingham Heart Study cohort was

used to assess the association between SSB consumption and presence of NAFLD (as determined by multidetector CT and serum alanine aminotransferase levels).

17% of participants had NAFLD, 12% reported drinking SSB daily and 34% never or rarely consuming SSB. “The most significant finding is that there was a dose-response relationship between SSB consumption and prevalence of NAFLD after accounting for many potential confounding factors,” says McKeown.

Owing to the nature of the study design no causal relationship can be drawn; however, the authors believe that these data support the hypothesis that SSB might contribute to the development of chronic diseases such as NAFLD.

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Original article Ma, J. et al. Sugar-sweetened beverage, diet soda, and fatty liver disease in the Framingham Heart Study cohorts. *J. Hep.* doi:10.1016/j.jhep.2015.03.032