

Keep Smiling; Think Before You Eat & Drink

Through chairside interventions, increase awareness of parents and children aged 0-6 years on how much free sugars are in discretionary snacks consumed regularly.

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OHPRG Bursary 2022

01. INTRODUCTION



Keep Smiling; Think Before You Eat & Drink, is an oral health promotion programme designed to help reduce sugar consumption in children ages 0-6 years.

In keeping with this years conference theme “Changing Minds”, this programme hopes to help young children and parents stop and think of the amount of sugar within popular foods and drinks consumed daily and make healthier choices.

02. BACKGROUND

Dental decay is preventable and reducing free sugar consumption is key.

Free sugars are monosaccharides and disaccharides added to foods and drinks and also natural sugars found in honey, syrups and pure and concentrated fruit juices. In 2015 the WHO recommended reducing the intake of free sugars to 10% of total energy intake.

The WHO also recommends that a further reduction to less than 5% of total energy intake would have additional health benefits.



02. BACKGROUND



**73% of
3 year olds**

in Ireland exceed the
maximum recommended
amount of free sugars

A recent Irish study carried out showed that 73% of 3 year olds free sugar intake exceeded the maximum recommended amount by the WHO guidelines while only 4% were below this mark (Crowe, M., O’Sullivan, M., Cassetti, O et al. 2020).

It also noted that the main food sources of free sugars were fruit juices and smoothies, soft drinks (including diluted/cordial juices and fruit juices), dairy products (yoghurt and fromage frais), confectionery (chocolate and non chocolate) and cakes and biscuits, making up more than $\frac{3}{4}$ of free sugar intake. Within this age group the study shows that these free sugar foods were consumed at a median frequency of four times per day.

02. BACKGROUND



Dental decay is the most widespread noncommunicable disease (WHO, 2017). People of all ages are at risk to dental decay but more vulnerable groups like children are more at risk.

Dental caries are a cumulative disease that can span from early childhood into adult years, therefore early preventative initiatives are vital.

03. AIM & OBJECTIVES

AIM;

Through chairside interventions, increase awareness of parents and children aged 0-6 years on how much free sugars are in discretionary snacks consumed regularly.

OBJECTIVES;

- Through our poster and leaflet campaign, highlight the sugar content of popular food and drinks consumed by children ages 0-6.
- By showing the sugar content within these foods, allow parents of this age group to become more aware of how much sugar their children are consuming daily and empower them to make better choices.
- Through displaying free sugar content of foods and highlighting daily allowances, educate children at a young age about free sugars in their foods,
- Create a cost and time effective oral health programme through a poster and leaflet campaign delivered chairside by the dental team.
- On reviewing evaluations at 1 and 3 months, update content if necessary and see if any change have been achieved.

04. MATERIALS

Posters

Presenting a poster can be an effective way of delivering the message of a health campaign in an easy-to-read and visual manner. A well designed poster can help engage conversation and let you get your point across to as many people as possible in a cost effective manner.

The posters will be designed to show the free sugar content of approx 12 popular foods and drinks regularly consumed by this cohort. It will also display how much sugar is recommended for their age group daily in all their food, to help educate them of how much sugar they are consuming and also help empower parents to make lower sugar food/drink choices with this knowledge. The poster will be placed in waiting rooms to help engage parents/children before they come into the surgery.



04. MATERIALS



Leaflets

A leaflet will allow for the delivery of more information than a poster can. Again it will highlight the free sugars in approx 12 of the most popular foods consumed by this cohort but also give more details on why reducing free sugars are so important especially at such a young age and discuss the importance of frequency of these sugars on a daily basis.

05. EVALUATION

After participation consent is obtained, questionnaires will be given to parents to fill out. This questionnaire will allow us to gather baseline information of parents' knowledge of free sugars. After 1 month, an evaluation survey will be sent to parents via SurveyMonkey.

On review of the survey, any changes required will be updated. This will then be repeated at 3 months to help gather data as to whether the initiative has achieved any change.



06. METHODS

The pilot project will focus on using the posters and leaflets as part of chairside education on free sugars in food delivered by the dental team.



By using the Model of Improvement we can use Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) cycles which will allow us to test out small changes in how we deliver our campaign and then build on them. PDSA's will allows us to learn from ideas and establish what will or will not be successful.

07. COSTS AT ROLL OUT STAGE

Graphic design	€200.00
Posters (20 x €16.26)	€325.20
Leaflets (500)	€169.42
Stationary (paper, postage, envelopes etc)	€100.00
Total	€794.62



08. DISCUSSION



Smile agus Sláinte National Oral Health Policy 2019 highlighted the need to address the risk factors for oral health through oral health promotion and protection programmes. Through many public health campaigns over the last few years we have become more aware of the danger of sugar and the importance of reducing it in our daily diets but unfortunately it is not always so clear as to how much free sugar is in foods and drinks and also how much is too much on a daily basis.

It can also be difficult to differentiate what are healthy and unhealthy choices as certain foods like breakfast cereals can be high in sugar but also contain nutritional value. For this reason the Keep Smiling campaign will focus on discretionary foods that are high in free sugars that dominate children's snack choices in our easy to understand leaflet and poster campaign.

08. DISCUSSION



The impact of Covid 19 lockdown and the effect on children's oral health also needs to be addressed. An early study is showing that during lockdown, children in all age groups frequency for consuming free sugars between meals increased particularly in older age groups. However it showed dental caries were diagnosed more frequently in children under 6 years (Maya Gotler, Liat Oren, Shoshanna Spierer, Noam Yarom, Malka Ashkenazi, 2022).

Public health interventions on the amount of foods high in free sugars and precise understanding of how we consume them as part of snacks and our main meals are now of even greater importance to help combat diet related disease such as dental caries and obesity.

09. CONCLUSION

Through our chairside interventions we hope to educate both parents and children on the sugar content in popular foods. By adapting the common risk factor approach by addressing sugar, this collaborative outlook can help improve overall health and not just the oral health of this cohort.



Acknowledgement

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References

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