



The dangers of hidden sugar

Transcript: Video clip from *Trust Me, I'm a Doctor*, series two, episode two.

Michael Mosley interviews Simon Capewell, Professor of Public Health and Policy.

DR MICHAEL MOSLEY:

What's the best evidence that sugar is bad for us in a way that other things possibly are not?

PROF SIMON CAPEWELL:

A lot of scientists would say that there's evidence of direct causal harm from sugars. So, even in people of normal weight, the more added sugar that individuals consume, the higher the risk of, say, heart disease and that's not just small studies but big cohorts from the United States.

DR MICHAEL MOSLEY:

For example?

PROF SIMON CAPEWELL:

So, Frank Hu co-authored a paper showing that as you looked at the different levels of consumption of added sugars in America, so the risk of heart disease and heart attack went up twofold or even threefold.

So that is, for me, the icing on the cake in terms of moving...

DR MICHAEL MOSLEY:

Great expression!

PROF SIMON CAPEWELL:

...moving from the kind of suggestive to the "OK, the case is made. What are we going to do about it?"

DR MICHAEL MOSLEY:

When it comes to heart disease, surely there are other things which are more important than sugar, such as lack of exercise?

PROF SIMON CAPEWELL:

Exercise is a minor risk factor for heart disease. Poor diet is the biggest single cause of disease and death in the world and certainly in the UK.

DR MICHAEL MOSLEY:

Now, the studies which show that high sugar is associated with risks of all sorts of diseases, could it not just be that, actually, it's just a marker for poverty and that, as we know, poverty is associated with these things?

PROF SIMON CAPEWELL:

That's a good question and there's no doubt that people who are poor, people who smoke, people who don't take exercise are also those who may consume more sugar. But those things can be taken out of the equation and dealt with mathematically to just look at the pure sugar effect and sugar alone, having adjusted for everything else, is still clearly harmful.

In other words, the larger amount of added sugar per day that people consume, the bigger the harm.

Background image for 'Surprisingly sugary': Getty Images