



# News Release

Monday 05 January, 2015

## **New Change4Life campaign encourages families to make Sugar Swaps**

A new Change4Life campaign launched today by Public Health England encourages parents to cut down the amount of sugar\* their children consume by making one or more simple swaps.

The campaign launches following a new survey amongst Netmums users who were polled on their views on sugar. The results highlight that nearly half (47%) of mums surveyed think their family has too much sugar in their diets and two-thirds of mums (67%) are worried about the amount of sugar their children consume.

Eating and drinking too much sugar means extra calories, which causes fat to build up inside the body. This can lead to heart disease, some cancers or type 2 diabetes later in life. Children who are overweight or obese when they are young are far more likely to become overweight or obese adults. Recently published data highlights that approximately 1 in 5 children aged 4 to 5 years old and 1 in 3 children aged 10 to 11 years old is overweight or obese.

Sugar can also have a devastating impact upon dental health, an integral part of overall health. Tooth decay was the most common reason for hospital admissions for children aged 5 to 9 in 2012 to 2013. 28% of 5 year olds in England have tooth decay and of these, 24% have 5 or more teeth affected. When children are not healthy this affects their ability to learn, thrive and develop.

While guidelines state that no more than 10% of a person's daily energy or calorie intake should be made up of sugar, at present, children aged 4 to 10 years are consuming up to 50% more than this. Children aged 4 to 10 get 17% of their daily sugar from soft drinks; 17% from biscuits, buns, cakes, pastries and fruit pies, 14% from confectionery, 13% from fruit juice, and 8% from breakfast cereals.

Change4Life recommends 4 simple Sugar Swaps for mums to choose from, tackling different 'sugar occasions' in the day:

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\* Sugars refers to Non Milk Extrinsic sugars. NMEs are sugars found in, for example, fruit juices, table sugar and sugars added to food.

- the breakfast swap: sugary cereal for plain cereal e.g. wholewheat biscuit cereal
- the drink swap: e.g. from sugary drinks to sugar-free or no-added-sugar drinks
- the after school swap: for example from muffin to fruited teacake
- the pudding swap: for example from ice cream to low-fat lower-sugar yoghurt

To understand the sugar issue from mums' perspective, Public Health England partnered up with Netmums and the University of Reading to deliver a 'Family Sugar Challenge'. A unique activity that involved 50 families, 24 of which were selected based on their geographical location for the initial analysis. The diets of the families were analysed in terms of sugar content, before and during the Change4Life's Sugar Swaps. This early analysis yielded surprising results:

- *on average the families were consuming 483g of sugar a day at the beginning of the challenge*
- *their sugar intake was reduced to 287g per day when making sugar swaps*
- *this meant an average daily saving of 196g of sugar per family each day, or 49 sugar cubes*

**Professor Kevin Fenton, National Director of Health and Wellbeing at Public Health England, comments:**

"Reducing sugar intake is important for the health of our children both now and in the future. We are all eating too much sugar and the impact this has on our health is evident.

"This campaign is about taking small steps to address this. We know from past campaigns that making simple swaps works and makes a real difference. This year we wanted to be even more single minded in our approach, which is why we are focusing on sugar alone. The family challenge highlights that simple swaps could lead to big changes if sustained over time."

**Fran Rowland, 32, from London, who along with her 3 children took part in the Challenge said:**

"I'm really glad we took part. The kids have really stuck to the swaps and still don't have sugar that often. Now after school they ask for cucumber and hummus rather than sweets!"

**Cathy Court, founder of Netmums said:**

"We know that mums want to provide a healthy diet for their children but balancing a number of competing priorities, including healthy eating, can be tricky. This research with Netmums showed that sugar consumption is a worry for parents but taking steps to reduce sugar can be really difficult. We hope that these simple sugar swaps from Change4Life will make it easier for parents to reduce their family's sugar intake."

Change4Life Sugar Swaps will launch on January 5 with television, radio, digital and out of home advertising, with an email support programme and a national road show visiting 10 locations. Change4Life Sugar Swaps is supported by Asda, Tesco, Co-op, Aldi, Coca-Cola (Diet Coke and Coke Zero), Morrisons, mySupermarket, and the Lead Association for Catering in Education (LACA).

Throughout the campaign, families will be able to register for their FREE sugar swaps pack which they will receive through the post. The packs are filled with hints, tips and recipe suggestions designed to help parents cut down the sugary foods and drinks consumed by their children, plus money-off vouchers, swap cards and stickers. To sign up, families just need to search Change4Life and register.

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### **Notes to Editors**

1. The Change4Life Sugar Swaps, recipes and images are available on request from the PHE press office or via the Change4Life website
2. Case studies are available
3. The Change4Life Sugar Swaps campaign will launch on 5 January 2015 and will continue until March 2015.
4. 687 parents of children aged 5 to 11 and 1720 parents of children of all ages were questioned as part of a survey which ran on netmums.com. October 2014
5. 50 families took part in the PHE, Netmums and University of Reading Family Sugar Challenge, 24 of which were initially identified as potential high sugar consumers. The diets of these 50 families were analysed in terms of sugar content both before and during the Change4Life Sugar Swaps campaign, October 23 to 4 December 2014. This is an early analysis and full results are expected in due course.
6. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation's health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. It does this through world-class science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. PHE is an operationally autonomous executive agency of the Department of Health. Website: [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe).  
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