

Avoid sugary food and drinks to combat fatty liver disease, new study reveals

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New research published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, reveals that a diet low in sugary food and drinks results in significant improvement in non-alcohol related fatty liver disease (NAFLD) in children aged 11 to 16 years old.

The British Liver Trust is urging families to take part in Fizz Free February to kick start a habit to reduce the amount of sugary drinks they drink throughout the year.

NAFLD is a build-up of fat in the liver. About 2 to 3 people in every 10 have this condition. Even young children can have NAFLD. In most people it is not harmful, but sometimes it can get worse, causing the liver to scar. For some people, it can cause the liver to stop working completely.

The British Liver Trust, which is the UK's leading liver health charity, suggests that NAFLD will overtake alcohol-related fatty liver disease as the leading cause of liver disease in the UK unless urgent action is taken.

Vanessa Hebditch, Director of Policy and Communications at the British Liver Trust said, "The emerging epidemic of childhood obesity means that increasing numbers of people will have NAFLD. This is a serious condition that is more common than people realise and can lead to liver failure, liver cancer and transplants in the future. The simple step of limiting the amount of sugary drinks your children drink can reduce their risk of getting this life threatening disease."

The study, carried out by Researchers at University of California San Diego School of Medicine and Emory University School of Medicine sought to measure change in liver fat after eight weeks of a low sugar diet compared to a typical diet. The researchers found that the children in the low-free sugar diet group had a reduction in liver fat of 31 percent on average, while the children in the typical diet group showed no improvement. Blood test measures of liver inflammation also indicated significant improvement for children in the low-free sugar group compared to the typical diet group.

"The substantial improvement seen in just eight weeks makes us believe that a diet low in free sugars has the potential be a clinically relevant treatment," said Jeffrey Schwimmer, MD, Professor of clinical paediatrics at the university. "The next steps will be to take what we have learned and test this approach in a way that empowers families to control the diet themselves for a long enough time to see if we can effectively treat NAFLD and prevent cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer."

Vanessa Hebditch at the British Liver Trust continues: "We are delighted that this study backs up what we say in our *Love Your Liver* campaign about the importance of cutting down on your fat and sugar intake to improve your liver health."

The charity urges people to take part in *Fizz Free February* and cut out fizzy drinks for the month to improve their liver health and also raise funds for the British Liver Trust at the same time. To find out more visit <https://www.britishlivertrust.org.uk/support-us/fundraise/fancy-a-fizz-free-february>

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