# Cereals Still Stuffed With Sugar

**Wednesday 28 January, 2015**

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Summary:

- Manufacturers claim to be improving the nation's breakfast but in fact the highest sugar containing cereals have either increased or stayed the same since 2012
- 14 out of 50 cereals contain a THIRD or more (?33.3g/100g) sugar, or 8 teaspoons per 100g
- Companies should look to the success of the salt reduction programme and reduce sugars, NOW!

Following the *2012 Which? Breakfast Cereal Report* [1] which revealed worryingly high amounts of free sugars in 50 breakfast cereals, three years on, a NEW survey by Action on Sugar has surveyed the same 50 products and revealed that cereal manufacturers have made little attempt in tackling the issue – shockingly, certain products even contain MORE sugars than they did in 2012!

As National Breakfast Week [2] kicks off – parents are warned of the dangers of hidden sugars, especially in breakfast cereals, which are contributing to the excess sugar intake and Britain's escalating obesity epidemic and to tooth decay.

One bowl (30g) of Aldi's Harvest Morn Choco Rice with 39g sugar/100g is almost half of the draft 25g maximum adult daily intake of free sugars [3], i.e. 3 teaspoons of sugar and the equivalent of 7 ½ Cadbury Fingers! [4]

Alarmingly the cereals with the highest sugar content have not responded to the calls for less sugar, and have either increased or stayed the same since 2012.

The highest sugar cereals include (see reference [5] for sugars in teaspoons):

- Aldi's Harvest Morn Choco Rice with 39g/100g. (An 18% increase since 2012)
- Kellogg's Frosties with 37g/100g. (The same as 2012)
- Morrisons Honey & Nut Corn Flakes with 36.3g/100g. (An 8% increase since 2012)
- Sainsbury's Honey Nut Corn Flakes with 36.3g/100g. (An 8% increase since 2012)
- Kellogg's Crunchy Nut with 25g/100g. (The same since 2012)

Some products have improved by lowering their sugars content. The largest reductions included Aldi's Harvest Morn Crunchy Honey Nut Corn Flakes with a 19% reduction from 34.4g to 28.0g/100g and Honey Monster Puffs (previously Sugar Puffs) with a 17% reduction from 35.0g to 29.0g/100g.

There is no reason why cereals that are high in sugars can't be reduced as there are identical products with less sugar. For example:

- Sainsbury's Honey Nut Corn Flakes (36.3g/100g) contains 43% more sugars than Lidl's Crownfield Corn Flakes Honey & Peanuts (20.8g/100g).
- Kellogg's Special K (with 17g/100g) contains 36% more sugars than Lidl's Crownfield Special Flakes Rice & Wheat (10.9g/100g).

High fibre, lower sugar and salt cereals can still play a part in a healthy diet, and if you read the labels you can find healthier options available. For example Shredded Wheat Original (0.7g/100g sugars) (which ranked the healthiest cereal in 2012), and Quaker Oats Oat So Simple Original (1.0g/100g sugars),both made with no added sugars, and Weetabix (4.4g/100g sugars).

There have been notable achievements among food manufacturers in reducing salt content since the 2012 survey, with the likes of Lidl's Crownfield Corn Flakes coming down by 1.02g/100g (60%) and Simply M&S Cornflakes coming down by 0.45g/100g (36%). All cereal manufacturers are being asked to follow their success with reducing salt, which has lowered the nation's blood pressure [6], and to reduce sugars.

Graham MacGregor, Professor of Cardiovascular Medicine at Queen Mary University of London and Chairman of Action on Sugar says: "Children quickly become used to the taste of high-sugar cereals and find healthier ones less palatable, which has long-term implications on their health. Eating too much sugar leads to weight gain, raising the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease and some cancers.

"One of the greatest failures in tackling Britain's obesity epidemic is the governments' appeasement of the food industry; we cannot allow this to go on any longer. The so-called 'Responsibility Deal', which allows the food industry to regulate themselves (a likened to 'Dracula being put in control of the blood bank'), has clearly failed. It's time for it to be scrapped."

Kawther Hashem, Nutritionist at Action on Sugar adds: "You wouldn't give your child chocolate biscuits for breakfast, yet certain manufacturers are effectively doing that for us. It is highly concerning that many parents are still buying cereal products for their children thinking they are choosing healthier products only to find these items are laden with excess sugar and calories.

"We urge parents to make more informed food switches such as choosing wholegrain breakfast cereals but not those coated with sugar or honey. Adding fresh fruit to cereal can make it more appealing and also increase its nutritional value."

To help make healthier choices, try FoodSwitch [7]! FoodSwitch is an award-winning, independent, free health app that allows users to scan the barcode of nearly 100,000 packaged foods and drinks to receive immediate easy to understand colour coded nutritional information along with suggested evidence-based healthier alternatives. It's a great way of sticking to your resolutions this year and making the switch to a healthier lifestyle.

-Ends-

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Notes to Editors

REF 1 **-** Which? Survey on breakfast cereals 2012. Which? researchers compared the nutritional content based on the manufacturers' information for 50 breakfast cereals.

50 cereals are based on the 17 best-selling breakfast cereals and own-brand equivalents for the top 3 adult cereals (excluding Weetabix own-brand equivalents) and top selling children's cereal.

http://www.actiononsalt.org.uk/news/Salt in the news/2012/64061.html

Where a supermarket branded cereal has been discontinued since 2012, the nearest equivalent was used apart from Morrisons Choco Crackles, no equivalent was found.

Product information was collected online, in-store or direct from manufacturers week commencing 12th January 2015 and all products mentioned in the release purchased 23rd-26th January 2015.

The sugars content collected doesn't include sugars from milk.

REF 2 - National Breakfast Week (25th-31st January) aimed at raising awareness of the health and nutritional benefits of breakfast

REF 3 - Draft recommendations by the Scientific Advisory Committee for Nutrition (SACN) for free sugars intake for adult women
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https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-draft-sacn-carbohydrates-and-health-report

REF 4 – Each Cadbury chocolate finger contains 1.6g sugar, a 30g bowl of Aldi's Harvest Morn Choco Rice contains 12g of sugar, which is equivalent to 7 ½ Cadbury Fingers.

REF 5 – Highest sugar cereals table

REF 6 - Feng J He, Sonia Pombo-Rodrigues, Graham A MacGregor. 2014. *Salt Reduction in England from 2003 to 2011: its Relationship to Blood Pressure, Stroke and Ischaemic Heart Disease Mortality.* BMJ Open;4:e004549 DOI:10.1136/bmjopen-2013-004549

REF 7 – FoodSwitch is available to download free on iPhone and Android smartphones. For more

information, visit www.foodswitch.co.uk. To download, search iTunes and Google Play for 'FoodSwitch' or follow the links:

iTunes - https://itunes.apple.com/gb/app/foodswitch-uk/id804442303?mt=8

Google Play –

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=uk.co.bupa.foodswitch&hl=en_GB

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