

ABSTRACT

Are carbohydrates making us fat? Evidence from Asia

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Asia is in the midst of a pandemic in both obesity and Type 2 diabetes. It also has the unenviable reputation as being the epicenter of Type 2 diabetes. The recent emergence of this phenomenon has been ascribed to the consumption of carbohydrate rich diets, coupled with the susceptibility of the Asian phenotype to weight-gain. Historically, the increase in obesity has been associated with the consumption of “western fast foods”. Ironically, many of the local foods we consume have more energy and fat content than fast foods! A common feature of this region is the regular consumption of rice, which is a high carbohydrate high glycemic index staple. Glycemic index is a measure of the glucose response to carbohydrate. A high GI food is one that increases blood glucose rapidly and low GI food is one that produces a modest increase in blood glucose. The regular consumption of high GI foods has been implicated in the etiology of obesity and Type 2 diabetes. Using a series of examples, the presentation will highlight how we may need to rethink our dietary patterns and intake of rice in order to continue enjoying its nutritional advantages. The presentation will also examine how a vast majority of people in Asia are resistant to weight gain despite consuming nearly one ton of food per year. A novel approach in energy regulation will also be highlighted. Given the fertile environment that surrounds Malaysia with a variety of fauna and flora, the key challenge is to identify and research on range of plant-based foods and ingredients that will reduce blood glucose, enhance satiety and minimize the risk of overweight and obesity.