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The Effects of Cow's Milk and Refined Sugar Consumption on Susceptibility to Illness

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Diets high in refined sugar leads to increased body mass which greatly contributes to cardiovascular disease. Bradbury [1] examined the effects of diet on gallstone development and found that body mass index and refined sugar consumption were positively associated with gallstone formation. Thorning et al. [2,3] conducted a review of literature that examined the effects of the consumption of cow's milk and dairy products on overall health in humans. They found that cow's milk was inversely associated with obesity and bone mineral density, and many cancers. The purpose of the present study was to examine the effects of refined sugar and cow's milk consumption on susceptibility to illness. It was hypothesized that refined sugar and cow's milk consumption would significantly affect susceptibility to illness. Specifically, those who consume refined sugar and cow's milk would have had an illness in the past year compared to those who do not consume these foods.

Method

Participants

One hundred and fifty-three college students (24 men and 129 women) between the ages of 18 and 45 participated in the study. Students under the age of 18 were not allowed to participate in the study. One hundred and three people said they consumed refined sugar 41 participants said they did not consume refined sugar. In addition, 109 participants said they consume cow's milk and 38 said they did not.

Materials and Procedure

A brief questionnaire was used to assess susceptibility to illness. The questionnaire was administered to students through Qualtrics (Provo, Utah), a software program used to collect data online. The questionnaire consisted of 10 questions that asked

participants if they had a cold, flu, allergies, nose bleeds, headaches, back pain, dizziness, sore throat and stomach virus in the past year. A demographic questionnaire was used to assess whether the participants consumed refined sugar or cow's milk as a part of their regular diet.

Results

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance was used to examine the effects of refined sugar consumption (consume, do not consume) and cow's milk consumption (consume, do not consume) on the dimensions of susceptibility to illness (cold, flu, allergies, nose bleeds, headaches, back pain, dizziness, sore throat and stomach virus). Both refined sugar consumption, $F(1) = 4.40, p = .038$, and cow's milk consumption, $F(1) = 5.55, p = .021$ had a significant effect on whether participants had sore throats in the last year. Participants who consumed refined sugar and cow's milk reported having a sore throat last year compared to those who did not consume these products. No other susceptibility to illness measure was significantly affected.

Conclusion

Inconsistent with the literature, cow's milk in the present study, contributed to the occurrence of sore throats. The difference in the findings may be attributed to the fat content of the milk. Thorning et al. [2] reported that low fat cow's milk was associated with lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol. Similar to cow's milk, refined sugar was positively associated with the occurrence of sore throats. These findings may be attributed to the association of refined sugar consumption and obesity. Obese and overweight individuals tend to have a strain on the throat caused by the excess weight around the neck. Future research should examine differences in fat content of milk and the BMI of participants.

Acknowledgement

None.

Conflict of Interest

None.

References

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