

Reduced brain health linked to refined carbohydrates, including sugar, and excess body fat

Scientists propose new strategies to address alarming declines in global brain health

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL, UNITED STATES, October 28, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- New research highlights the links between refined carbohydrate intake leading to excess body fat, called

overfat, and the reduction of [brain health](#)—now affecting about 80 percent of the world's population. This important research comes just in time for the holiday season.

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Scientists propose simple public health strategies similar to tobacco control to rapidly turn the tide of poor brain health—which also promotes mortality risk.

It's estimated that by 2040 neurodegenerative disease—the end-stage of unhealthy brains—will become the second-leading cause of death worldwide. Early reductions in brain health can contribute to cognitive and behavioral problems such as poor learning, human error, depression, mental fatigue, and many others that present long before diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's appear.

Publishing in the journal *Frontiers in Public Health*, researchers Philip Maffetone and Paul Laursen detail this disturbing trend of reduced brain health, which can be decelerated or even prevented with simple measures of reducing refined carbohydrates.

While population health is often viewed as being influenced by social factors, this scientific paper also addresses the effects of brain dysfunction as it affects the health of individuals, populations, and societies across the planet.

A primary cause of declining brain health, which can begin early in life, including childhood, is associated with the global rise of diet-induced excess body fat, now called the overfat pandemic. Refined carbohydrates and their metabolic consequences are already strongly linked to the dramatic increase of chronic disease and unchecked healthcare costs.

While refined carbohydrates may be a primary cause of excess body fat and poor brain health,

these foods are relatively easy to restrict and control through public health measures. The problem is not only prevalent in Western countries but now in India, China and Africa.

By reducing or eliminating refined carbohydrate foods, nutrient-dense healthy items replaced in the diet can also improve brain health.

Globally, public health policies have failed to address this key cause of diminishing brain health, excess body fat, and chronic illness—the consumption of sugar and other refined carbohydrates; governments have even encouraged it.

As such, the authors propose relatively simple, cost effective public policy strategies to create rapid improvements in individual and population health.

These policies go beyond those used to control tobacco use, and include sugar taxation and marketing restrictions, financial incentives for individuals, school-based nutrition programs, elimination of government lobbying influence and junk food subsidies, and others. Also important is avoiding deceptive advertising and labeling of food ingredients. For example, most products called “whole grain” or “whole wheat” are not—they still contain refined carbohydrates that can negate the benefits of any truly whole grains present in the product or diet.

The authors characterize sugar as the new tobacco, with Dr. Maffetone adding, “Most people know how bad tobacco is, but the harms from sugar are still a hard sell.”

A larger global public health initiative, void of big business and lobbying, to reduce the consumption of unhealthy food is essential for improving brain and body health, for individuals and societies across the planet, the authors say.

The full scientific paper, Refined Carbohydrates and the Overfat Pandemic: Implications for Brain Health and Public Health Policy <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/public-health/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2025.1585680/full>

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