



# Pre debate article:

## Are we addicted to sugar? Waistlines, wallets and sugar taxes

**Society has a problem with obesity and excess sugar consumption has had a role to play in the development of that problem. Certainly, excess sugar in our diets is associated with weight gain, and being overweight or obese can lead to serious health problems such as diabetes and heart disease. But are we addicted to sugar? And what can we do to help reduce sugar consumption?**

Addiction is an emotive word and the debate about whether individuals can be addicted to sugar in the same way as they can be addicted to illicit drugs goes on. But perhaps emotional engagement with the obesity problem is what the country needs to spur it into action? After all it is going to be an extremely difficult task to stem the raise in obesity rates, let alone to actually start to reduce the numbers of individuals who are overweight or obese.

The government has attempted to respond to the obesity problem in several ways. Perhaps the most headline-grabbing response has been the plans to

introduce a sugar tax on soft drinks. Elsewhere, sugar has also been incorporated into the government's nationwide Change4Life marketing campaign with the 'get Sugar Smart' promotional materials launched in January 2016. However the government has recently stopped short of introducing measures to prevent advertisements of high-sugar products to children, and prevent the use of promotional offers on high-sugar products in retailers.

We are bringing together some influential voices in this debate, asking whether these measures are worth the price to change society's relationship with sugar and help to reduce the serious health problems associated with obesity? Put simply, will any of these measures actually affect our waistlines, or will they purely affect our wallets?

Join us for an exciting debate - Are we addicted to sugar? Waistlines, wallets and sugar taxes - part of our Health and Wellbeing debate series on the 15th September at London South Bank University.

The panel debate will draw on the opinions and expertise of professionals on both sides of the sugar divide. Experts include Malcolm Clark from Sustain, Dr Mick Armstrong from the British Dental Association, Dominic Watkins from DWF, and Emily Barley from People Against Sugar Tax.

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