

OVERWEIGHT, NOT SUGAR, CAUSES DIABETES

JERUSALEM -- A team of scientists at the Hadassah-Hebrew University Medical Center in Jerusalem believe that it is overweight, rather than sugar or starch intake which contributes to diabetes. This is one of several findings emerging from research on diabetes carried on as part of the Israel Ischemic Heart Disease Project, a collaborative undertaking between the National Heart and Lung Institute, Bethesda, Md., the Hadassah Medical Organization in Israel and the Israel Ministry of Health. Headed by Prof. J. H. Medalie, the teams included Drs. J.B. Herman, H.N. Neufeld, E. Riss and U. Goldbourt of Israel, Drs. F. W. Mount, H. Kahn and C. Bachrach, of N.I.H., and many others. Dr. Joseph B. Herman, who has made diabetes his special interest for the past 30 years has been particularly involved in the diabetes aspect of the project. Dr. Herman is chief physician in Hadassah's Medical Outpatient Department C, and immigrated to Israel in 1961 from South

Africa here he worked with Dr. W.P.U. Jackson. He comments: "Israel is an ideal country for such research because of the varied population. The incidence of diabetes among more than 10,000 Israeli male government employees from different countries of birth was studied over a period of five years, 120 independent variables were tested. In this research we had a unique opportunity to study the details of the diet of thousands of people in relation to diabetes. "A great deal of research has been done on the occurrence of diabetes in experimental animals given various diets, including sugars or starches, but this is the first long-term incidence study involving such a large number of persons in the crucial over-40 diabetes-prone age group. "In the original sample of 10,059, we found 500 diabetics. During the five-year period of the study, approximately 400 additional people developed the disease. It was possible to pinpoint those who developed diabetes



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during the study period and then go back and examine the possible factors relating to the development of the disease." He continued: "Our first conclusion has been that there is no significant association between the constituents of the diet and the subsequent development of diabetes. Much has been written about the association of sugar in the diet with diabetes, and people are warned that eating too much sugar involves a greater risk of developing the disease. In this study we found on repeated analysis that there was no relationship between sugar as such in the diet. The same applies to carbohydrates, the starch foods, and to fats. It is not what you eat, but overweight

that counts. "There is a clear relationship between overweight and the subsequent development of diabetes. Each



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age group studied exhibited the same pattern of increased incidence of diabetes as the weight/height index increased. This relationship between overweight and diabetes onset was known before, but our investigation has clearly demonstrated it.

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