



BDSI

Bundesverband der Deutschen  
Süßwarenindustrie e.V.

# From Myths

to

# Facts

Clarity  
about

Confectionery  
and

Snack Products

# From Myths to Facts

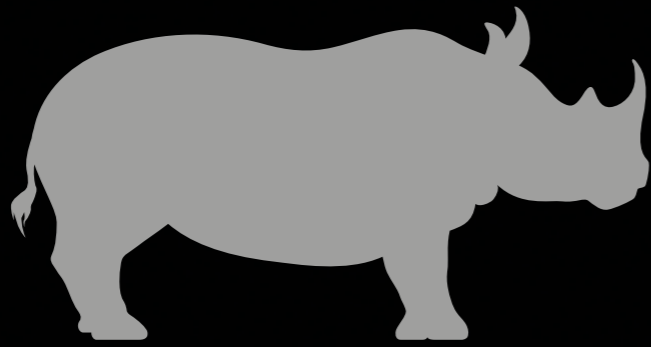
Clarity  
of  
facts  
about  
Confectionery  
and  
Snack Products

Regarding the role of its products in nutrition, the German confectionery industry sometimes faces a multitude of biased accusations and false factual claims. Our brochure “From Myths to Facts” seeks to provide greater clarity about confectionery and snack products on the basis of scientific facts and studies, hence enriching a factual discourse.

In response to common myths and fairy tales, we invite you, dear reader, to engage in examining factual arguments in the context of facts, data and figures. We look forward to exchanging ideas with you.

Your BDSI team

# Myth



**Confectionery makes people fat.**

# Fact

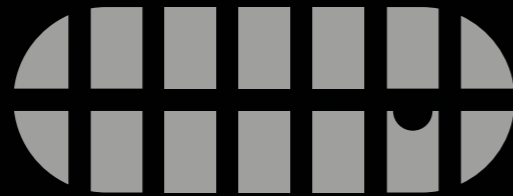


**That is incorrect.**

**Our entire lifestyle, especially if sedentary, and many additional factors all contribute to the occurrence of overweight.**

Our everyday lives are increasingly deficient in physical movement and activity. We are particularly impacted by a sedentary lifestyle, even in our leisure time. Neither our dietary habits alone nor a single food group can be held responsible for our gaining too many kilos. Nutritional studies have failed to show any correlation between eating patterns, confectionery consumption, and body weight.

# Myth



**Confectionery causes dental caries.**

# Fact



**Above all else, good oral hygiene prevents dental caries.**

**Nowadays 81% of 12-year-olds are free of dental caries. Oral health is also significantly improving among younger adults. The reason for this is that people are increasingly taking better care of their teeth and using fluoride toothpastes.**

# Myth



**Sugar-sweetened products cause diabetes.**

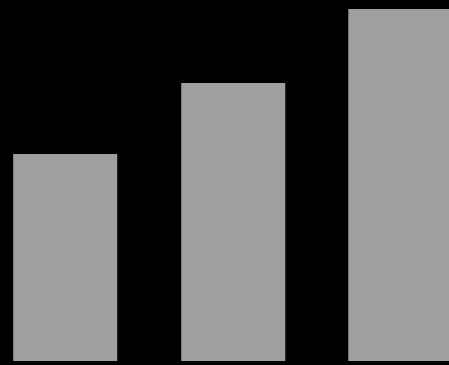
# Fact



**Diabetes is not triggered by the consumption of sugar.**

**A key risk factor impacting the occurrence of type 2 diabetes is overweight. This occurs when more calories are consumed than are expended over the long term. However, all the foods we eat contribute to our calorie intake!**

# Myth



**People in Germany  
are eating more and more  
sweets.**

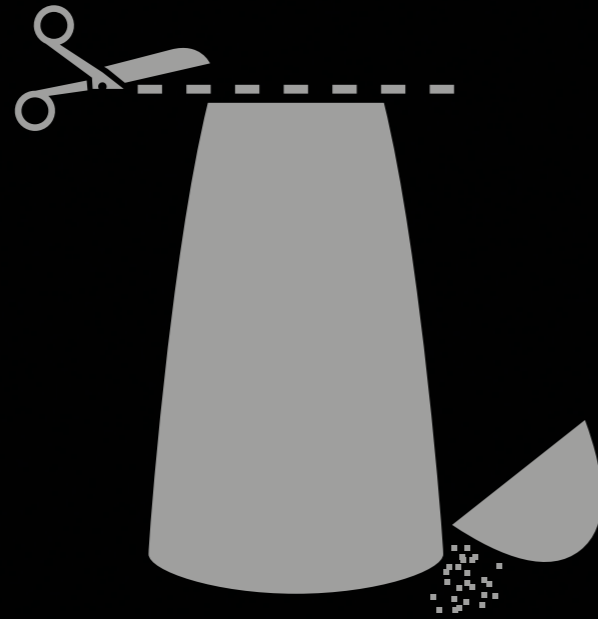
# Fact



**That is incorrect:  
confectionery consumption is stagnating,  
especially among children.**

The most accurate data available in Germany is on children, since the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) polled parents and children in its KiGGS study and the University of Bonn did so in its DONALD study. According to the RKI, the total volume of sweets consumed “fell considerably” from 2003 to 2017 – a drop of between 20% and 30%, depending on the respective gender and age group.

# Myth



**The sugar content in confectionery can easily be reduced.**

# Fact



**This sweeping statement, as it stands, is inaccurate. Moreover, sugar gives many products their typical characteristics.**

**As anyone who has ever baked biscuits knows, using much less sugar than is stated in the recipe produces biscuits that are frequently neither nicely golden-brown nor really crispy. Many cakes then lack their usual “fluffiness” and ice cream, for example, lacks its typical creamy texture. And reducing the sugar content in other confectionery is also challenging.**

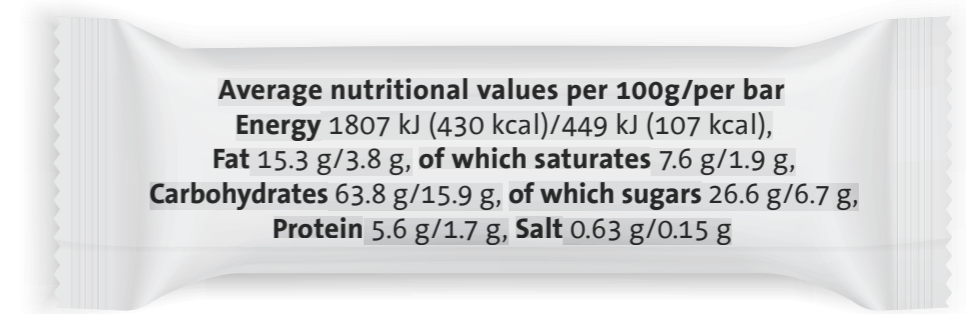


# Myths



**The sugar content of various products is deliberately concealed.**

# Fact



**On the contrary: it is to be found listed in the nutrition table on every pack.**

If you want to know how much sugar a particular product contains, this information is to be found in the nutrition table: under "carbohydrates" you will always find "of which sugars". The amount stated here, per 100 g or 100 ml of food, includes all naturally occurring sugars as well as all added sugars.



# Myth



**Consumers  
cannot properly assess  
confectionery.**

# Fact



**Study shows  
that the vast majority are well aware  
of their nutritional significance.**

**Around 80% of the German population know confectionery is primarily a food consumed for pleasure and enjoyment and not a staple food. This means most people realise that confectionery is the “icing on the cake” of their diet and not there to fill them up.**

# Myth



**Sweets are addictive.**

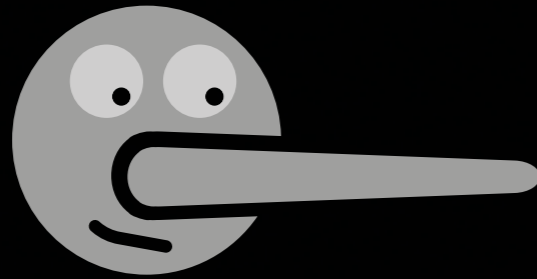
# Fact



**Confectionery contributes to our pleasure and enjoyment  
and our well-being.**

**So far – with the exception of alcohol and caffeine –  
no addictive substances have been identified in food.  
Nor is there any evidence that sugar and sweet foods  
in particular can trigger addiction in humans.**

# Myth



**An additional sugar tax would reduce obesity.**

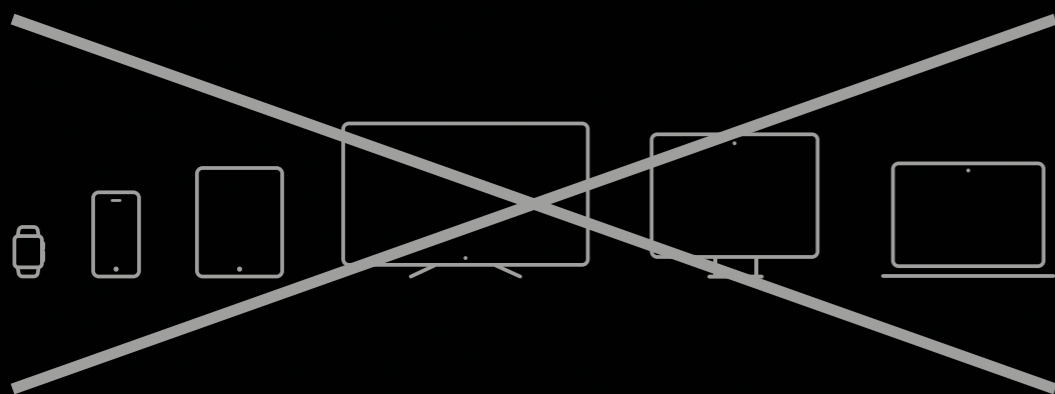
# Fact



**It would be a money-spinner for the German government, but would not make citizens any slimmer.**

Great Britain, Norway, France, Mexico – some countries already levy a tax on sugary products, for example. And even though this has been making products more expensive for many years in some cases, scientists have not yet been able to sufficiently prove that people eat fewer calories overall or become slimmer as a result.

# Myths



**A ban on advertising sweets to children would reduce overweight.**

# Fact



**Bans do not make people slimmer – but an active and healthy lifestyle does.**

Educational research has long since come to the conclusion that a family's lifestyle, the circle of friends, and the wider social environment has a more decisive influence on children's (nutritional) behaviour than does advertising. Banning advertising does not automatically help people to lead healthier lives. Foreign countries, such as Great Britain, have already made that experience.

**Myth**



Confectionery makes people fat.

**Fact**




That is incorrect. Our entire lifestyle, especially if sedentary, and many additional factors all contribute to the occurrence of overweight.

**Our entire lifestyle and many additional factors all contribute to the occurrence of overweight.**

For many years, research over a wide range of disciplines has been looking into the question of why more and more people are becoming overweight. **Scientists agree that the occurrence of overweight is due to a complex web of causes. The role of nutrition is overestimated. Nutritional studies, for example, have failed to show any correlation between eating patterns, confectionery consumption, and body weight.** In other words, it is generally not easy to tell whether a person is thin


or fat from what they eat and drink. Nor does sugar consumption automatically build up more fatty tissue. In fact, the consumption of so-called free sugars, sweets and sweet drinks has been stagnating or declining for years, especially among children living in Germany. And yet the number of overweight people is not decreasing. This might sound surprising to some people. It becomes a little more understandable if we care to look a little further afield. For example, our sedentary lifestyle plays a key role: we burn up far fewer calories by sitting for long periods of time in the office, at school, in the car, on the bus and train, in front of the television and computer than we do when we are physically active. Stress, difficult living conditions, lack of sleep, heredity factors, various diseases, and limited mobility, e.g. in old age, are also factors that can affect changes in our body weight. Those who focus only on nutrition or even individual ingredients as the “adjusting screws” are by no means properly addressing the complex problem of overweight.

**Myth**



Confectionery causes dental caries.

**Fact**




Above all else, good oral hygiene prevents dental caries.

**Above all else, good oral hygiene prevents dental caries.**

This has been impressively proven for years by the German Oral Health Study (DMS), the only representative nationwide study on oral health. In the current study, dentists have attested to the fact that **81% of 12-year-olds are nowadays free of dental caries.** This figure doubled in the period from 1997 to 2014. Children living


in Germany rank top in a comparison between countries. Oral health has also significantly improved among younger adults. **The reason for this is that people are increasingly taking better care of their teeth and using fluoride toothpastes.** Various factors influence the development of dental caries, but ultimately it is down to the acid formation caused by plaque bacteria which leaches minerals out of a tooth. This weakens the tooth and makes it vulnerable to attack. Bacteria form these acids from sugars and starches, such as those found in sweets, bread, pasta, and sweet fruits like bananas. The more often a food containing sugar and/or starch is eaten during the course of the day, the more frequently one’s teeth are vulnerable to an acid attack. And yet if you brush your teeth regularly and do so thoroughly, acids and dental caries can easily be avoided.

**Myth**



Sugar-sweetened products cause diabetes.

**Fact**



Diabetes is not triggered by the consumption of sugar.

**Diabetes is not triggered by the consumption of sugar.**

The misleading name “sugar disease” for the metabolic disorder now known as diabetes stems from the days when the disease was known but nothing was known about its causes and there was no known therapy. Doctors detected that the urine of diabetes patients

was sweet. In the 18th century, the British physician and natural philosopher Matthew Dobson identified a type of sugar that he held to be the culprit. The first successful therapy by administering insulin came about in 1922. Research revealed that **diabetes is caused by a reduced production of the sugar-metabolism-regulating hormone insulin (diabetes mellitus type 2) or by its non-production (diabetes mellitus type 1).** A **key risk factor** impacting the occurrence of type 2 diabetes is overweight. This occurs when more calories are consumed than are expended over the long term. All foods – not just those sweetened with sugar – contribute to the overall calorie intake. And research shows that **sugary foods do not automatically contribute to the occurrence of diabetes if the difference between calorie intake and calorie consumption is balanced overall.**

**Myth**



People in Germany are eating more and more sweets.

**Fact**



That is incorrect: confectionery consumption is stagnating, especially among children.

**Confectionery consumption is stagnating, especially among children.**

This has been shown by the latest key surveys. The most accurate data available in Germany is on children, since the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) polled parents and children in its KiGGS study and the University of Bonn

did so in its DONALD study. According to the RKI, the **total volume of sweets consumed “fell considerably” from 2003 to 2017** – a drop of between 20% and 30%, depending on the respective gender and age group. And the DONALD study also showed a **decline in the intake of “free sugars”\*** from 1985 to 2016. Particularly girls took in continuously declining volumes of them from eating sugar and sweets. No current nutrition surveys are available on adults that would allow a comparison of the amounts of sweets they consumed over the years. However, the German Nutrition Society (DGE) documents in its current nutrition report that consumption in the key **confectionery categories is stagnating or slightly declining.**

\*“Free sugars” are all sugars added to food by manufacturers, cooks, consumers, plus those naturally present in honey, syrups, and fruit juices.



## Myth



The sugar content in confectionery can easily be reduced.

## Fact



This sweeping statement, as it stands, is inaccurate. Moreover, sugar gives many products their typical characteristics.

### Can the sugar content in confectionery be reduced easily? No. This is not generally true.

As anyone who has ever baked biscuits knows, using much less sugar than is stated in the recipe produces biscuits that are frequently neither nicely golden-brown nor really crispy. Many cakes then lack their usual “fluffiness” and ice cream, for example, lacks its typical creamy texture. And reducing the sugar

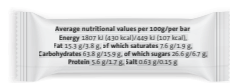
content in other confectionery is also challenging. It is impossible to do so in the case of caramels, i.e. all sweets that consist (almost) entirely of sugar. These examples show that it is not all that easy to reduce the sugar amounts. **For sugar has many other properties than “merely” providing a sweet taste.** In the case of some confectionery products, the use of alternatives, e.g. sweeteners, is prohibited or only permitted to a limited extent. Each food product must hence be checked to see if a sugar reduction is possible in its manufacture. If so, a suitable strategy must be developed in each individual case. And for the manufacturer, despite all the efforts that might be undertaken, there is a risk that the sugar-reduced products will not taste as good to the consumer as his (original) favourite product.

## Myth



The sugar content of various products is deliberately concealed.

## Fact



On the contrary: it is to be found listed in the nutrition table on every pack.

### The sugar content of products is to be found listed in the nutrition table on every pack.

If you want to know how much sugar a particular product contains, this information is to be found in the nutrition table: under “carbohydrates” you will always find “of which sugars”. The amount stated here, per 100 g or 100 ml of food, includes all naturally

**occurring sugars as well as all added sugars.** And this term refers to all types of sugar such as glucose (grape sugar), fructose (fruit sugar), sucrose (household sugar) and lactose (milk sugar), and also includes sugar from sweet ingredients such as honey. The list of ingredients shows the types of sugar used in the preparation of the product. In this context, the law stipulates that the various sugars used must be specifically stated. In contrast to the nutritional table, “sugar” in this case means household sugar – all other types of sugar, such as those mentioned above, are listed separately. The ingredients are listed in order of content amount. Different types of sugars are used because of the taste factor and for technological reasons.

## Myth



Consumers cannot properly assess confectionery.

## Fact



Study shows that the vast majority are well aware of their nutritional significance.

### Study shows that the vast majority of consumers are well aware of the nutritional significance of confectionery.

This is clearly evident from the findings of a representative consumer survey commissioned by the Association of the German Confectionery Industry

(BDSI) (responDI/December 2020). More than four in five German citizens expect sweets to have a high sugar content. Assessments are almost identical for the statement “sweets contain a lot of calories”. Around 80% of the German population also know that confectionery is primarily a food consumed for pleasure and enjoyment and not a staple food. **This means most people realise that confectionery is the “icing on the cake” of their diet and not there to fill them up.**

## Myth



Sweets are addictive.

## Fact



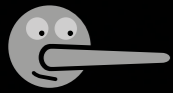
Confectionery contributes to our pleasure and enjoyment and our well-being.

### Confectionery contributes to our pleasure and enjoyment and our well-being.

When someone says that something they find tasty is addictive, most people are not aware of the fact that they are carelessly burdening food with a serious problem that, on reflection, has nothing to do with food consumption. **So far – with the exception of alcohol and caffeine – no addictive substances have been identified**

**in food. Nor is there any evidence that sugar and sweet foods in particular can trigger addiction in humans.** And this is despite the fact that scientists have been working intensively on this very issue. Nor has it been known for anyone with a strong craving for sugar to eat it by the spoonful or even go so far as to breach social norms to acquire some. It is, however, known that people have an innate fondness for “sweetness”. Scientists assume that, for our ancestors, something that tasted sweet indicated “ripe” and “edible”, whereas bitter often meant “poisonous”. A sweet taste provides pleasure and joie de vivre, and like other pleasant experiences or “rewards”, e.g. listening to music, the joy of a win, meeting your loved one, something tasting good also activates the so-called reward centre in our brains. Hence this is a completely normal process and has nothing to do with developing an addiction.

## Myth



An additional sugar tax would reduce obesity.

## Fact



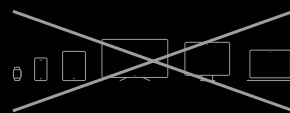
It would be a money-spinner for the German government, but would not make citizens any slimmer.

### Taxes levied on food ingredients do not help make people slimmer.

Great Britain, Norway, France, Mexico – some countries already levy a tax on sugary products, for example. And even though this has been making products more expensive for many years in some cases, **scientists have**

**not yet been able to sufficiently prove that people eat fewer calories overall or become slimmer as a result.** And the same applies to the occurrence of (severe) overweight and diseases to which an unbalanced diet contributes. The argument made by such tax advocates is that an increase in the price of certain foods or beverages would lead to less of them being bought and consumed. Maybe so, but given the large range of foods available, it is more likely that many will switch to other products for their sugar and energy intake. **This seems to be the case in Mexico, for example, where a tax on sugary soft drinks was introduced in 2014, and yet the number of severely overweight people still continued to rise.**

## Myth



A ban on advertising sweets to children would reduce overweight.

## Fact



Bans do not make people slimmer – but an active and healthy lifestyle does.

### Banning advertising does not automatically help people to lead healthier lives.

Educational research has long since come to the conclusion that a family's lifestyle, the circle of friends, and the wider social environment has a more decisive influence on children's (nutritional) behaviour than does advertising. In addition, the occurrence of overweight is not only down to one's nutrition.

**Instead, a lack of exercise, stress, difficult living conditions, a lack of sleep, heredity factors, and many additional aspects also play a role.** We live in a media world where companies also draw attention to their products and their properties by way of advertising. **It is a far more promising prospect to get children physically fit, to let them know how to deal with advertising properly, and to teach them and show by example what a balanced diet is.** Advertising directed at children and young people is already regulated by law and voluntarily restricted. The confectionery industry also clearly primarily addresses adults and not children in its TV advertising, this being by far the most popular medium preferred by the industry. Corresponding laws are in place to protect them, added to which the food industry has also imposed a voluntary set of rules on itself. **Banning advertising does not automatically help people to lead healthier lives.** Foreign countries, such as Great Britain, have already made that experience.

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**Our entire lifestyle and many additional factors all contribute to the occurrence of overweight.**

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