GET THE FACTS: Sugary Drink Consumption

Sugary drinks include regular soda, fruit drinks with less than 100% juice, sweetened water, sports and energy drinks, and coffees and teas with added sugars.\(^1,2\)

- Diet drinks, alcohol, coffee, and teas without added sugars and flavored milks that contain 50% dairy or more are usually not considered sugary drinks.\(^3\)

- On average, US adults and children consume nearly 150 calories a day from sugary drinks, or about 6-12% of their daily caloric needs.\(^4,5\)

Sugary drinks account for nearly half of the total added sugars in a typical American diet.\(^1\) About half of adults and over 60% of kids consume a sugary drink on any given day.\(^2,5\)

- Despite some decline in consumption in recent years, both adults and kids in the US continue to consume more sugary drinks and added sugars than recommended.\(^6,7\) Sugary drinks are often cheaper than bottled water, making them an attractive option when tap water is not safe to drink.\(^8,9\)

- Beverage companies focus advertising\(^10,11\) and retail marketing\(^12\) efforts on African Americans and Hispanic Americans, as well as on children.\(^13\)

- Research shows that African Americans and Hispanic Americans drink more sugary drinks compared to non-Hispanic White Americans.\(^4,14,15\) Among households with young children, those with lower incomes purchased more sweetened fruit drinks compared to households with higher incomes.\(^16\)

There is strong evidence suggesting that drinking too many sugary drinks substantially increases the risk of gaining excess weight and obesity,\(^7,16\) and developing chronic diseases including diabetes, cardiovascular disease, tooth decay, and cavities.\(^19-22\)
Experts recommend drinking water instead of sugary drinks. There are many ways to make drinking water more available:

- **At home:**
  - Be a model to kids by limiting or eliminating your own consumption of sugary drinks.
  - Offer drinking water or other non-sugary options.

- **At school:**
  - Teach students about the amount of sugar in common beverages and the importance of reducing intake for improved health outcomes.
  - Implement federal food and beverage standards that prohibit sales of unhealthy options like sugary drinks in schools.
  - Increase access to and promotion of free, safe drinking water in schools.

- **In your city, county, or state:**
  - Limit sales of sugary drinks on city property.
  - Create healthier out-of-school time environments by training staff to adopt a healthy beverage policy in their programs.
  - Implement a sugary drink excise tax to discourage consumption, as many US jurisdictions have successfully done. This is projected to be a cost-saving strategy that can improve population health and health equity.

WHERE CAN I LEARN MORE?

See the list of references for this fact sheet: [www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/priority-areas/sugary-drinks/sugary-drink-consumption-fact-sheet](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/prc/priority-areas/sugary-drinks/sugary-drink-consumption-fact-sheet)

The following additional resources may be useful:

- The CHOICES Project has evaluated the potential impact on health and health equity that a sugary drink excise tax could have in Hawaii, Minnesota, Denver, Utah, California, New York City, and New York state. Learn more: [https://choicesproject.org/choices-map](https://choicesproject.org/choices-map)


- Sugar Toolkit Overview: Why take on sugar? Healthy Food America. Available at [www.healthyfoodamerica.org/sugartoolkit_overview](http://www.healthyfoodamerica.org/sugartoolkit_overview)


SUGGESTED CITATION


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