



# They Say, We Know

*Why the Soda Industry's Arguments Against Regulating Soda Don't Hold Up*

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## On Health

**They Say:** Obesity is complicated. Many things drive it, not just sugary drink consumption.

**We Know:** No one claims soda to be the only contributor to obesity. But research shows it's a major one. In fact, 43% of the increased daily calories Americans consumed from 1977-2001 -- while the obesity epidemic was climbing most sharply -- came from soda and other sugary drinks.

**They say:** Consumption is down, but obesity is up.

**We Know:** Consumption of soda and other sugary drinks has more than doubled since the 1980s. While it is true that people are now drinking fewer carbonated beverages than they did a decade ago -- which is good news -- consumption of energy drinks and sports drinks, and flavored waters are on the rise.

**They say:** Soda and other sugary drinks make up a small fraction of the American diet.

**We Know:** Sugary drinks contribute at least 43% of the 300 additional daily calories consumed by Americans since the 1970s. They are also the largest single source of added sugars in our diet. In fact, one out of three added sugar calories comes from soft drinks alone.

**They Say:** A calorie is a calorie, whether it comes from sugar or something else.

**We Know:** Drinking 200 "empty" calories of sugar is not the same thing as eating 200 calories of nutritious broccoli. Sugary beverages are nutritionally bankrupt and simply do not satisfy hunger like calories from solid food or milk (which contains protein). Additionally, the body processes liquid calories differently. We absorb liquid sugar in as little as 30 minutes, much faster than a candy bar, leading to a spike in blood sugar that the body is not well equipped to handle, particularly in repetition. These spikes in blood sugar can overwhelm the body and lead to the transformation of sugar into fat in the liver, which contributes directly to the development of diabetes.

**They Say:** The key to combating obesity is increasing physical activity.

**We Know:** Physical activity is very important in maintaining overall health. But recent research shows it's far less important than calorie intake in explaining weight gain.

**They Say:** The science about sugary drinks and obesity isn't clear.

**We Know:** The science is rock solid. There is a strong and clear connection between sugary beverages and both obesity and diabetes. The studies that don't support the connection are usually funded by the beverage industry. What's more, sugary drinks are also related to cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, dental caries, and poorer diet quality.



## On Taxes

**They Say:** Taxes won't solve obesity or diabetes.

**We Know:** Obviously no single initiative will solve the obesity and diabetes epidemics. But considering how many empty calories people consume from sugary beverages and how aggressively the soda industry markets these unhealthy products, taxing soda is a good place to begin. In addition, revenues from a sugary drink tax can be used to fund physical activity and nutrition education programs that improve health in communities most at risk.

**They Say:** Truck drivers and other people will lose jobs from a soda tax.

**We Know:** This is nothing but a scare tactic, playing off of people's anxieties in a down economy. And it doesn't make much sense. Here's why: If the tax drives down soda consumption, as it might, people will simply buy more lower calorie beverages. Truck drivers will still be needed to deliver diet drinks, bottled water and juice.

## On Health Warning Labels

**They Say:** Placing warning labels on sugary drinks is misleading.

**We Know:** A health warning label provides consumers with the essential information that they need to make informed decisions about beverages that science shows have a unique role in driving the obesity and diabetes epidemics. While people may know in vague terms that sodas aren't healthy, few are familiar with the overwhelming science that makes a direct link between the consumption of sugary drinks and diabetes. A health warning label would highlight these risks in easy to understand language, while leaving it to the consumer to make the decision.

**They Say:** The warning label is predicated on the mistaken assumption that sugary beverages are to blame for obesity and diabetes, and that cutting out such beverages will lead to a decline in obesity and related health problems.

**We Know:** Science is absolutely clear that sugary drinks are a major source of excessive calorie intake. The average American's daily caloric intake has increased by nearly 300 calories, 43% of which come from the consumption of SSBs in particular. There is also strong evidence that reducing consumption of these sugary drinks can reduce weight gain.

In addition, sugary drinks are proven to uniquely contribute to diabetes. When consumed, liquid sugar delivers a sugar rush to our bodies, overloading the pancreas and creating the liver fat that leads to diabetes. Research shows that drinking one to two sugar-sweetened beverages per day will increase your risk of developing type II diabetes by 26 percent.



**They Say:** The solution to obesity and related problems lies in moderation, not warning labels.

**We Know:** We have tried for decades to tell people to eat and drink in moderation, while the junk food and beverage industries have simultaneously increased portion sizes and marketing budgets. The result? U.S. adults consume 42 gallons of SSBs a year. To burn off just 200 calories of sugary drink alone (not to mention everything else you consume), it takes a full hour of brisk walking or 35 minutes of aerobics.

**They Say:** Continuing to blame beverage manufacturers, or forcing them to put misguided warning labels on their products, will discourage people from taking personal responsibility for their actions.

**We Know:** Quite the contrary. Even the beverage industry has said that education must be a central solution to the obesity epidemic. This label promotes individual responsibility by ensuring that consumers have full information about the products they are consuming.