

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages:

Extra Sugar, Extra Calories, and Extra Weight



SEPTEMBER 2011

Scientific evidence consistently supports the conclusion that drinking soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages increases a person's risk of being overweight or obese. As a result, reducing the amount of sugar-sweetened beverages people drink is an important strategy to reverse the obesity epidemic in California and across the country.

- Containing almost 16 teaspoons of sugar in every 20-ounce serving, sweetened beverages are the largest single source of added sugar in the American diet.¹ Each day Americans consume 22 teaspoons of sugar — far surpassing the recommended 5 to 9 teaspoons per day.²
- 41% of children (ages 2–11 years) and 62% of adolescents (ages 12–17 years) in California drink at least one soda or other sugar-sweetened beverage every day.³
- California adults who drink a soda or more per day are 27% more likely to be overweight or obese, regardless of income or ethnicity.⁴
- The average American consumes 45 gallons of soda and other sweetened beverages each year.⁵
- Americans consume about 250–300 more daily calories today than they did several decades ago, and nearly half of this increase reflects greater consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages.⁶
- A child's risk for obesity increases an average of 60 percent with every additional daily serving of soda.⁷
- The average soda sold in the United States has more than doubled in size since the 1950s, from 6.5 oz to 16.2 oz.⁸
- Marketers spend close to \$500 million dollars a year to reach children and adolescents with messages about sugar-sweetened drinks, more than they spend on any other category.⁹
- Liquid calories are not well compensated for by reductions in the intake of other sources of energy; therefore, calories from sweetened beverages tend to be “extra” calories that lead to higher total energy intake.¹⁰

1. “Dietary Sugars Intake and Cardiovascular Health. A Scientific Statement from the American Heart Association.” *Circulation*. August 2009.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Bubbling Over: Soda Consumption and its Link to Obesity*. UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, September 2009.

4. *Ibid.*

5. Andreyeva T, Chaloupka FJ, Brownell KD. Estimating the potential of taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages to reduce consumption and generate revenue. *Preventive Medicine*. 2011;52(6):413-6.

6. Kelly D. Brownell and Thomas R. Frieden, “Unces of Prevention — the Public Policy Case for Taxes on Sugared Beverages,” *New England Journal of Medicine*, April 30, 2009.

7. “Relationship between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: a prospective, observational analysis.” *Lancet*, 2001. 357:505-508.

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9. Berkeley Media Studies Group. *Sugar Water Gets a Facelift: What Marketing Does for Soda*. September 2009.

10. Woodward-Lopez G, Kao K, Ritchie L, op cit.



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