



◇ THE BITTER TRUTH ABOUT SWEETENED BEVERAGES.....1



◇ MAKE WISER BEVERAGE CHOICES AT WORK.....2



◇ SEND US YOUR IDEAS AND QUESTIONS2



◦ Volume 2 | ◦ May 2010 | ◦ Sweetened Beverages

WIC Worksite Wellness Newsletter

The Bitter Truth About Sweetened Beverages

Have you heard the recent media buzz about the link between sweetened beverage consumption and obesity? A strong body of scientific evidence has found that sweetened beverages like soda, sports drinks, sweetened teas, and fruit drinks are contributing to Americans' weight gain and health problems. Many public health experts are calling soda the new tobacco. Here is a look at what the current news and research says about the link between sweetened beverages and health.

Diet: Soda consumption has been linked to lower intakes of milk and calcium; higher intakes of carbohydrates, and lower intakes of fruit and dietary fiber.

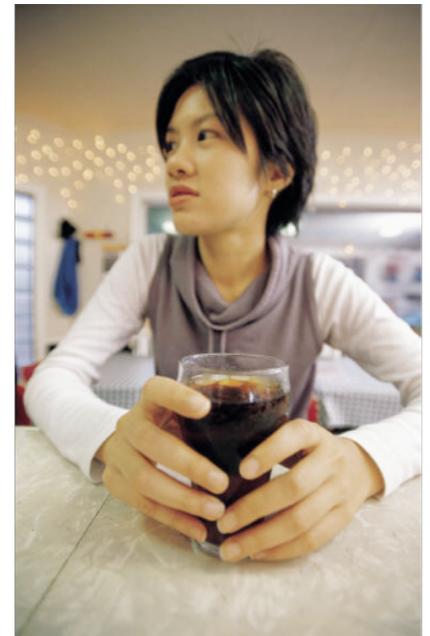
Heart health: A study from Harvard's School of Public Health monitored over 88,000 women for a period of 24 years. They found that the risk of heart disease increased 20% for those women who drank 2 or more sweetened drinks per day as opposed to women who drank less than one sweetened drink a month.

Excess calories: From 1977 to 2002, Americans' consumption of soft drinks grew 228%. Portion sizes of the average soda nearly doubled between the late 70's and mid 90's from 13 fl oz to almost 20 fl oz.

Americans consume 5.5% of their total calories from sweetened beverages.

Weight gain: Studies suggest that we don't regulate liquid calories the way we do solid calories. In other words, we don't eat less food when we drink extra calories in the form of sweetened beverages. Researchers have shown that adding sweetened drinks to a person's diet for 3-10 weeks increases their daily caloric intake, resulting in proportional weight gain.

Policy strategies for reducing consumption: Many states, from CA to NY, are proposing a soda tax. The CA bill would levy a tax for every penny per teaspoon of added sugar. The legislation would direct funds from the excise tax to obesity prevention efforts.



Studies show that increasing the cost will result in decreased consumption. Similar to tobacco, advocates are hoping that the tax will drive down consumption and improve overall population health.

For more on this topic:

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Make Wiser Beverage Choices at Work

Here are some ideas about what you can do on your own or as an agency to stay healthy by promoting and selecting healthier beverage options at work.

What You Can Do on Your Own:

1. Bring a water bottle to work and refill it throughout the day.
2. Add slices of lemon, lime, cucumber, or watermelon, or drink sparkling water for variety.
3. Pour a splash of 100% juice into plain sparkling water for a refreshing, healthy alternative.
4. When you do choose a sugar-sweetened beverage, select the small size.

Tips for Your Agency's Wellness Program:

1. Work with your vending machine contractor to replace sweetened beverages with healthier alternatives and to make smaller portions of sweetened beverages available.
2. Make drinking water available to all staff free of charge. Filtered tap is best!
3. Post point of decision prompts encouraging healthy beverage purchases near the cafeteria and vending machines.
4. Provide facilities for cleaning water bottles and reusable cups for drinking H₂O.

SEND US YOUR IDEAS & QUESTIONS



We want to know what worksite wellness ideas are working for your agency. We also want to hear your questions and concerns about implementing worksite wellness. Share your agency's successes and/or questions by emailing us at:

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