



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Shun the Sodas

Beverage Consumption Among High School Students — United States, 2010

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[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Ask any kid. There's nothing more refreshing on a hot summer day than an ice cold drink. But sugar-sweetened beverages, like soda or sports drinks, are high in calories and lack essential nutrients that the body needs.

Caitlin Merlo is a researcher and registered dietitian with CDC's Division of Adolescent and School Health. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of limiting the consumption of sodas and other sugar-sweetened drinks by teenagers. Welcome to the show, Caitlin.

[Ms. Merlo] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Caitlin, what types of drinks are most popular among teenagers?

[Ms. Merlo] In our study, we found that water, milk and 100 percent fruit juices are the most commonly consumed beverages among high school students, but we also know that sodas, sports drinks, and other sugar-sweetened beverages are popular drinks. In fact, they are one of the top five contributors of calories and added sugars among kids and adolescents. And these popular beverages include sodas, fruit-flavored drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, sweetened flavored waters, and sweetened tea drinks.

[Dr. Gaynes] So how much is *too* much when it comes to sodas and other sugar-sweetened drinks?

[Ms. Merlo] Sugar-sweetened drinks are really high in calories and lack important nutrients, so it's recommended that kids and teens limit the consumption of these drinks, as much as possible.

[Dr. Gaynes] Do sugar-sweetened drinks actually rehydrate the body?

[Ms. Merlo] Well, all beverages provide some amount of water, which can help rehydrate the body, but sugar-sweetened beverages, overall, have a lot of extra calories and poor nutritional value. We recommend that kids drink water, especially before, during, and after physical activity. Kids really don't need sports drinks.

[Dr. Gaynes] Caitlin, what health problems can result from over-consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks?

[Ms. Merlo] Drinking too many sugar-sweetened beverages can result in several different health problems, including cavities, as well as excess weight gain leading to obesity and type 2 diabetes. It can also be a problem because it replaces the more healthful beverages that kids should drink, like milk and water.

[Dr. Gaynes] How can we encourage teenagers to choose more healthy drinks, like water and milk?

[Ms. Merlo] Families, schools, and community organizations all play an important role in promoting access to healthful beverages and limiting sugar-sweetened beverages. Parents can lead by example and encourage their children to drink water and milk by modeling these behaviors themselves. Parents can make sure that jugs or pitchers of water are easily accessible in the refrigerator at home, and that sugar-sweetened beverages are *not* available in the home. Schools can also ensure that kids have access to free drinking water all day at school.

[Dr. Gaynes] Caitlin, where can listeners get more information about the dangers of teenagers drinking too many sugar-sweetened beverages?

[Ms. Merlo] Listeners can go to www.cdc.gov and type “sugar sweetened drinks” into the search box.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Caitlin. I’ve been talking today with CDC’s Caitlin Merlo about the importance limiting the consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks by kids and teens.

Remember: Over-consumption of such beverages can lead to excessive weight gain and obesity. A soda’s OK once in a while, but parents should make sure that children and teenagers drink plenty of water.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.