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## RESOURCES: SODA CONSUMPTION

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Scientific evidence suggests that sugar-sweetened beverages are one of – if not the – single largest contributor to the obesity epidemic<sup>[1],[2]</sup>. Between 1977 and 2001, Americans consumed 150-300 more calories per day, of which approximately 50 percent comes from sugar-sweetened beverages<sup>[3]</sup>.

One 20 ounce bottle of soda has almost 17 teaspoons of sugar and contains 250 calories, with every additional daily serving of sugar-sweetened soda increasing a child's risk for obesity by 60 percent<sup>[4]</sup>. Yet children today drink more of these products today than any prior generation<sup>[5]</sup>. Forty-one percent of children (ages 2-11), 62 percent of adolescents (ages 12-17) and 24 percent of adults in California drink at least one soda or other sugar-sweetened beverage every day<sup>[6]</sup>.

The link between sugar-sweetened beverages and obesity is amplified by the fact that 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<sup>[3]</sup>.

Increased sugar consumption dramatically increases risk for Type 2 diabetes<sup>[7]</sup> which, for the first time, has become a problem for adolescents as well as adults. Sugar sweetened beverage intake is also associated with inadequate intake of several important nutrients, including calcium, iron, folate and vitamin A<sup>[8]</sup>.

Rising consumption of sugary drinks rates is likely due a variety of factors, including larger portion sizes, pervasive marketing, and increasing accessibility of these products. The average soda sold in the United States has more than doubled in size since the 1950s, from 6.5 ounces to 16.2 ounces<sup>[3]</sup>. 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<sup>[9]</sup>. At the same time, the price of these products has decreased over the last decades compared to the price of other foods. The increasing affordability of soda – and the decreasing affordability of fresh fruits and vegetables – likely contributes to the rise in obesity in the United States<sup>[2]</sup>. However, studies have also indicated that a 10 percent increase in the price of sugar sweetened beverages could reduce the consumption of them by 8 to 11 percent<sup>[10]</sup>.

**Next Steps.** With childhood obesity rates soaring, policies must be established at the federal, state, and local levels to increase both access to healthier beverage options and awareness of the risk factors associated with frequent soda consumption. Such policies could include those that improve the nutrition quality of beverages sold in vending machines, enforce school-based soda policies, and impose taxes or fees on sugar-sweetened beverages at the local, state, and federal levels.

For quick facts on sugar-sweetened beverages, see CCPHA's [Soda Fact Sheet](#).

### Footnotes

<sup>[1]</sup> Vartanian LR, Schwartz MB, and Brownell KD. Effects of soft drink consumption on nutrition and health: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Am J Public Health*, 97:667-75, 2007.

<sup>[2]</sup> Brownell KD and Freiden TR. Ounces of Prevention – The Public Policy Case for Taxes on Sugared Beverages. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 360(18):1805-8, April 2009.

<sup>[3]</sup> Woodward-Lopez G, Kao K, Ritchie L. To what extent have sweetened beverages contributed to the obesity epidemic? UC Berkeley Dr. Robert C. and Veronica Atkins Center for Weight and Health. January 2009 – unpublished.

<sup>[4]</sup> Ludwig, DS, Peterson KE, Gortmaker SL. Relationship between consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks and childhood obesity: a prospective, observational analysis. *Lancet*. 2001; 357:505-8.

[5] Center for Science in the Public Interest. "[Liquid Candy: How Soft Drinks are Harming Americans' Health.](#)" June 2005.

[6] Babey SH, Jones M, Yu H and Goldstein H. Bubbling over: Soda consumption and its link to obesity in California. Healthy Policy Brief: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. Sept 2009.

[7] Schulze MB, Manson JE, Ludwig DS, et al. Sugar-sweetened beverages, weight gain and incidence of type 2 diabetes in young and middle aged women. JAMA Aug 25;2004;292(8):927-934

[8] Chaloupka FJ, Powell LM, Chiqui JF. Sugar-sweetened beverage taxes and public health. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Research Brief, July 2009.

[9] Berkeley Media Studies Group. Sugar water gets a facelift: what marketing does for soda. April 2009.

[10] Chaloupka FJ, Powell LM and Chiqui JF. Sugar-sweetened beverage taxes and public health. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Research Brief. Jul 2009.

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