

Drink Water!

Water is essential for every system in your body to function properly and to maintain optimal hydration. Promoting water consumption is an important strategy for reducing the consumption of sugary drinks, which are contributing to the nation's obesity epidemic.

SUGARY DRINKS AND CHRONIC DISEASE

Research links sugary drink consumption with an increased risk of:

- Type 2 diabetes;
- Cardiovascular disease;
- Stroke;
- Non-alcoholic fatty liver disease;
- Pancreatic cancer;
- Endometrial (uterine) cancer; and
- Metabolic syndrome (includes high blood pressure, high triglycerides and insulin resistance).



Thirsty for Health?

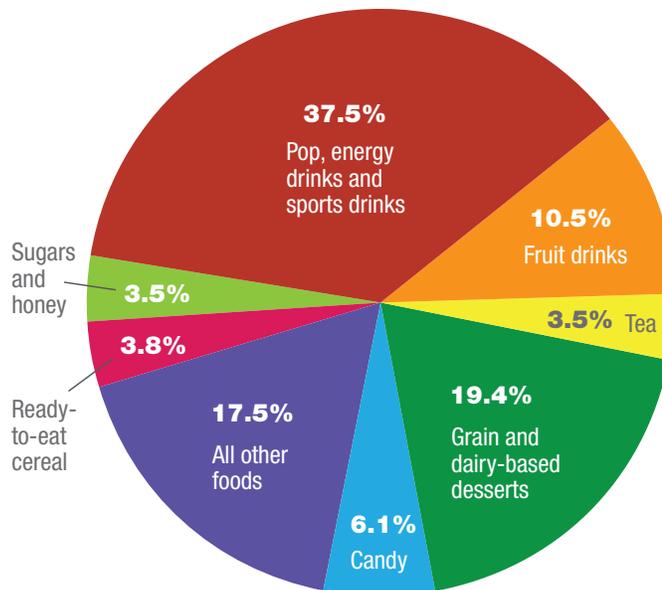
Reduce Sugary Beverage Consumption

Tackling the Challenge of Too Much Added Sugar

Although many factors influence rates of obesity and being overweight, research shows that sugary beverages play a significant role. Sugary drinks are no longer considered a special treat and have become an every-day beverage and contribute many extra calories to our diets. Today Americans consume about 250-300 more calories daily than they did several decades ago. Nearly half of this increase is due to greater consumption of sugary drinks which offer "empty" calories, provide no nutritional value and do nothing to support health.

While liquid calories are not as filling as solid food, studies indicate that people who add calories through sugary drinks typically don't reduce what they consume from other sources. Instead, sugary drink consumption is associated with increased calorie intake, poorer overall diet quality and lower intake of healthier choices such as fruit and milk. To add to the challenge, to burn off the 150 calories found in a typical 12-ounce regular pop, an adult must walk briskly for at least 30 minutes. Because so few people engage in this amount of exercise regularly, consuming sugary drinks makes it even harder for the average person to maintain a healthy weight.

WHERE DOES SUGAR COME FROM IN YOUR DIET?



REGULAR POP CONSUMPTION IN KANSAS

- 23.7 percent of Kansas 6th to 8th grade students report that they drink a pop more than once a day.
- On any given day, 76 percent of Kansas high school students drink a non-diet pop, and 21.6 percent report drinking two or more daily.
- Nearly one-third (30.3 percent) of Kansas adults report drinking a pop or fruit drink or both, one or more times a day.

The Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation of the Kansas Hospital Association has created a series of resources designed to inform and support efforts to promote healthy food and beverage options within health care settings. The Public Health Law Center assisted in creating this document which is based on a resource originally developed in partnership with Stacia Clinton and Health Care Without Harm, with assistance from Jamie Harvie with the Institute for a Sustainable Future. Financial support for this series was provided by the Kansas Health Foundation. More detailed information and other resources in this series can be found on the Healthy Kansas Hospitals website at www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org.

Thirsty for Health? DRINK WATER!

Hospitals Can Help Make Water an Easier Choice

Almost half (48 percent) of sugary drinks are consumed away from home. Promoting water and encouraging healthier food and beverage choices outside the home will help reduce the intake of added sugar. Hospitals can take a leadership role in this effort.

Many institutions in Kansas and nationally are implementing creative approaches to increase access, awareness and education about water. Making sure that drinking fountains are kept clean, placing signs near vending machines directing people to the closest public water fountain and installing conveniently placed bottle-filling stations are some ways to increase access to water.

“Research shows that replacing sugary drinks with water could cut up to 235 calories per day from the average American child’s intake.”

It’s not just hospitals that are taking steps to promote tap water as a healthy choice; restaurants, worksites and educational institutions also are moving in this direction. The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition’s Karat Gold initiative offers resources and peer-to-peer support to help restaurants, catering businesses, hospital cafeterias, school kitchens and other eateries increase local food purchases and implement sustainable food service best practices. Its best practices include promotion of free drinking water, such as installing water coolers in large meeting rooms instead of using bottled water; eliminating sugar-added beverages from vending machines and buying bottled water only for disaster preparedness or emergency uses.

Marketing Healthier Choices

Health care nutrition services departments, workplace cafeterias and vendors are learning to use the “4Ps” of marketing – **P**roduct, **P**romotion, **P**lacement and **P**ricing – to promote purchases of healthier products. A basic Product strategy is to make sure that a good mix of healthy choices is available – offer attractive fresh fruit and herb-infused water (“spa” water) in vending and retail locations; low- or no-calorie waters; unsweetened coffees and teas; and skim milk.

Promotion strategies include raising awareness, such as posting signs at beverage points-of-purchase about the health benefits of water and the caloric consequences of sugary beverages. Displays, such as a plastic tub filled with sugar to illustrate the approximately 40 pounds of sugar the average American consumes in sugary beverages per year, also are effective. Other ways to educate about healthier products include menu labeling with calorie information, physical activity messages showing how much exercise it takes to burn off a sugary beverage and/or using a “red, yellow, green” traffic light scheme to help people understand which beverages are healthy and which should be drunk only rarely, if ever.

Placement strategies make healthier products more visible, appealing and convenient, while moving the less healthy options to less visible, less easy-to-grab spots. For example, place healthy products on the checkout counter, in grab-n-go baskets, at eye-level on shelves or in the prime selling slots in vending machines. Pricing is another important marketing tool. Less healthy products should be priced higher than healthy foods/beverages. Using price differentials not only encourages purchases of healthy products, but also more accurately reflects the cost of unhealthy products to the economy and the health of the workforce.

THE TASTE MYTH

A common misperception is that bottled water tastes better than tap water. However, in many blind taste tests, consumers actually have preferred the taste of tap water to bottled water or could not tell the difference. Recent market research shows that growing numbers of restaurant diners are ordering tap water over other beverages. Water has overtaken pop in popularity, as awareness about its health impact has grown.

Water Is Clearly the Best Choice

Hands down, water is the best healthy beverage choice for most people in most situations. While bottled water is healthier than sugary drinks, tap water is the smarter, cheaper choice. It is safe, better for the environment, less expensive and in many cases offers health benefits such as fluoride. Hospitals and other health care facilities can promote healthier beverage environments by taking steps to make water more appealing and accessible within their campuses.

Tap Water Is Healthy, Cost-Effective

If your tap water is fluoridated, it has oral health benefits that most bottled waters don’t have. Tap water also has other health and safety benefits. For example, tap water does not come with the risk of consuming bacterial growth from bottles that are reused or chemicals that leach from plastic bottles exposed to heat or wear-and-tear. A 2008 study by the Environmental Working Group found a variety of pollutants in common bottled water brands including fertilizer, pharmaceutical residues and carcinogenic chemicals. This study concluded that despite consumers’ perceptions to the contrary, bottled water products were generally no more “pure” than tap water. (It should be noted that many bottled water products are filled with municipal tap water that has been distilled or processed in some way.)

Tap water is cost effective on multiple fronts. Because disposable plastic water bottles are not designed for reuse, bottled water generates huge volumes of waste that negatively impact the environment. Only 23 percent of plastic beverage bottles are recycled, sending some 2 million tons of waste to U.S. landfills annually. The processes of making, filling and distributing bottles of water require *six times* as much water per bottle as comes in the average container, a real concern as water resources become more scarce. The excess water and fossil fuels involved with producing plastic bottles, filling and transporting them translates into higher prices. Bottled water can cost up to 4,000 times more than tap water.

It makes sense from a hospital perspective to promote tap water because it doesn’t have the same costs for buying, transporting and recycling that bottled water entails. It also is more cost effective for employees and visitors. Bottled water can cost from \$1.00 to more than \$3.00 per bottle in vending machines and from retailers; tap water is free.

TAP WATER CAN PROMOTE BETTER ORAL HEALTH

Nearly two-thirds of Kansans (63.6 percent) live in communities that provide fluoride in the water system. In addition to being calorie- and fat-free, fluoridated tap water helps prevent tooth decay and promotes oral health. Tooth decay is one of the most common chronic diseases that affect Kansas children, and it is largely preventable. Regularly rinsing with and drinking fluoridated tap water help keep the mouth clean of bacteria and ensure that you receive fluoride in small, regular doses. Although drinking bottled water is healthier than drinking pop and other sugary drinks, most bottled water products do not contain the optimal amount of fluoride, and bottled water companies do not have to disclose fluoride content on labels. People who choose to drink mainly bottled water and do not receive enough fluoride from other sources (such as toothpaste) may not realize that they are not getting the fluoride needed to fight tooth decay.

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