

# New study says soft drink consumption not the major contributor to childhood obesity

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Most children and youth who consume soft drinks and other sweetened beverages, such as fruit punch and lemonade, are not at any higher risk for obesity than their peers who drink healthy beverages, says a new study published in the October issue of *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*. The study examined the relationship between beverage intake patterns of Canadian children and their risk for obesity and found sweetened beverage intake to be a risk factor only in boys aged 6-11.

"We found sweetened drinks to be dominant beverages during childhood, but saw no consistent association between [beverage intake](#) patterns and [overweight and obesity](#)," says lead author Susan J. Whiting. "Food and beverage habits are formed early in life and are often maintained into adulthood. Overconsumption of sweetened beverages may put some children at increased risk for overweight and obesity. Indeed, boys aged 6-11 years who consumed mostly soft drinks were shown to be at increased risk for overweight and obesity as compared with those who drank a more moderate beverage pattern."

The authors determined [beverage consumption](#) patterns among Canadian children aged 2-17 years using cluster analysis where sociodemographics, ethnicity, household income, and food security were significantly different across the clusters. Data were divided into different age and gender groups and beverage preferences were studied. For this study the sweetened, low-nutrient beverages, categorized according to Canada's Food Guide, consisted of fruit-flavoured beverages, beverages with less than 100% fruit juice, lemonades, regular soft drinks, and sweetened

coffees or teas.

The authors found the main predictors of childhood obesity in Canadian children were household income, ethnicity, and household food security.

**More information:** Danyliw, A.D., Vatanparast, H., Nikpartow, N., and Whiting, S.J. Beverage patterns among Canadian children and relationship to overweight and obesity. *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism*, 37(5) doi: 10.1139/ H2012-0074. [This article is available Open Access at [www.nrcresearchpress.com/doi/abs/10.1139/H2012-074](http://www.nrcresearchpress.com/doi/abs/10.1139/H2012-074)]

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