

Federal food program pays \$2 billion annually for sugar-sweetened beverages

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(Medical Xpress)—The federal government's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) pays at least \$2 billion annually for sugar-sweetened beverages purchased in grocery stores alone, according to a

study by the Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity.

The study, published in the October issue of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, provides a conservative estimate on spending because it does not include sugar-sweetened beverage SNAP purchases from other retail channels such as convenience stores or WalMart.

SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps, is designed to offer financial assistance to low-income people and families to buy the food they need for good nutrition and health. The Yale researchers compiled data from a regional supermarket chain, then studied beverage purchases by households and families with a history of participation in federal nutrition assistance programs.

Researchers found that 58 percent of all refreshment [beverages](#) purchased by SNAP participants were for sugar-sweetened beverages such as regular soda, fruit drinks, and sports drinks. According to the researchers, SNAP benefits paid for 72 percent of these purchases.

"SNAP benefits are critically important in helping low-income families put food on the table, and in this economy, many American families could not feed their children without the federal food assistance provided by SNAP," notes lead author, Tatiana Andreyeva, the Rudd Center's director of economic initiatives.

"At the same time, the annual use of billions of dollars in SNAP benefits to purchase products at the core of public health concerns about obesity and chronic illnesses is misaligned with the goal of helping economically vulnerable families live active, healthy lives," Andreyeva adds. "Anti-hunger and public health advocates should work together to ensure that all government [food](#) assistance programs are implemented in a way that is consistent with helping Americans meet government dietary recommendations."

Provided by Yale University

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