

Sweet drinks need tooth decay warning

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(Medical Xpress)—Researchers from the University of Adelaide say any health warnings about soft drinks should include the risk of tooth decay, following a new study that looks at the consumption of sweet drinks and fluoridated water by Australian children.

"There is growing scrutiny on sweet drinks, especially soft drinks, because of a range of detrimental health effects on adults and children,"

says Dr Jason Armfield from the Australian Research Centre for Population Oral Health at the University of Adelaide's School of Dentistry.

"[Tooth decay](#) carries with it significant physical, social and [health implications](#), and we believe the risk of tooth decay should be included in any warnings relating to sweet drinks," he says.

Dr Armfield is the lead author of a new study published this month in the [American Journal of Public Health](#), which looks at the consumption of sweet drinks and fluoridated water by more than 16,800 Australian children.

The study found that:

- 56% of Australian children aged 5-16 years consumed at least one sugared drink per day;
- 13% of children consumed three or more sugared drinks on average per day;
- boys consume more sweet drinks than girls;
- children from the lowest income families consumed almost 60% more sugared drinks;
- the number of decayed, missing and filled deciduous (or baby) teeth was 46% higher among children who consumed three or more sweet drinks per day, compared with children who did not consume sweet drinks.

"Consistent evidence has shown that the high acidity of many sweetened drinks, particularly [soft drinks](#) and [sports drinks](#), can be a factor in dental erosion, as well as the sugar itself contributing to tooth decay," Dr Armfield says.

"Our study also showed that greater exposure to fluoridated water significantly reduces the association between children's sweet drink consumption and tooth decay. This reconfirms the benefits of community water fluoridation for [oral health](#).

"Essentially, we need to ensure that children are exposed less to sweet drinks and have greater access to drink fluoridated water, which will result in significantly improved dental outcomes for children," he says.

"If health authorities decide that warnings are needed for sweet drinks, the risk to dental health should be included. This action, in addition to increasing the access to fluoridated water, would benefit children's teeth greatly. Such information would raise further awareness of the impact of sweet drinks on children's teeth, especially among parents who need to make healthy choices for their children."

More information: [ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/ ...
105/AJPH.2012.300889](http://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/10.1136/ajph.2012.300889)

Provided by University of Adelaide

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