

Research concludes sugar-sweetened beverages contribute to US obesity epidemic, particularly among children

April 24 2014, by Mollie Turner



Juan Carreño de Miranda's "La monstrua desnuda" (The Nude Monster) painting.

In response to the ongoing policy discussions on the role of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) on weight and health, The Obesity Society (TOS) concludes that SSBs contribute to the United States' obesity epidemic, particularly among children. Based on an in-depth analysis of the current research, the TOS position statement unveiled today provides

several recommendations for improving health, including that children minimize their consumption of SSBs.

"There's no arguing with the fact that the high rates of [obesity](#) in the U.S. are troubling for our nation's health, specifically the recently reported rise in [severe obesity](#) among children in *JAMA Pediatrics*," said TOS spokesperson Diana Thomas, PhD, Professor at Montclair State University and Director of the Center for Quantitative Obesity Research. "Following a thorough review and analysis of the existing research, TOS concludes that, by adding more non-nutritious calories to the American diet, SSBs have contributed to the U.S. [obesity epidemic](#). Further, we recommend that to maintain and improve health children minimize drinking SSBs and adults reduce or avoid SSB consumption as part of an overall strategy to reduce calories."

According to the position statement posted online, TOS defines SSBs as sodas, sports drinks and other types of beverages that are primarily made up of water and added sugar. Consumption of these drinks in the U.S. remains high - Americans report that SSBs comprise 6-7% of overall calorie intake.¹

"Despite the challenges researchers have faced with isolating the impact of specific foods or beverages on body weight, the studies conducted on SSBs thus far have generated important and meaningful data leading to our conclusion," said Dr. Thomas. "The evidence shows that individuals with a higher BMI consume more SSBs than their leaner counterparts, and that decreasing SSB consumption may reduce overall calorie intake and help individuals with obesity or overweight reach healthy weight goals."

Weight gain occurs when total energy intake exceeds energy expenditure for extended periods of time. Because SSBs are a non-nutritious source of calories, decreasing and even eliminating them from the diet offers an

excellent opportunity to reduce total energy intake. As a healthy alternative to SSBs, TOS reinforces the need for individuals to consume more water, a readily accessible, calorie-free source.

"Our efforts to help improve the food choices and environment for Americans certainly don't stop here," said Steven R. Smith, MD, TOS President. "More research is needed to better understand the relationship between SSB reduction and weight loss in adults, as well as the relationship between all energy-dense foods and weight."

TOS recognizes that weight gain is a problem for many individuals that rises beyond both calories consumed and any singular calorie source.

"We encourage policymakers, scientists, clinicians and the public to further explore the total caloric density of foods, including all foods high in added sugar, in an effort to provide more science-based nutritional insight and develop healthier food and beverage options to support America's health," continued Dr. Smith. "We look forward to serving as a continued resource for science-based information in this area."

More information: For more information read the full position statement here: www.obesity.org/publications/r...l-caloric-intake.htm

Provided by Obesity Society

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