

San Francisco approves health warning on sugary drink ads

June 9 2015, byJanie Har



This Wednesday, Oct. 1, 2014, file photo, shows soft drinks for sale at K & D Market in San Francisco. San Francisco officials are deciding whether to impose a warning on ads for soda pop. Supporters and opponents say San Francisco would be the first place in the country to require warnings on ads for soda, which is linked to rotting teeth and obesity. (AP Photo/Jeff Chiu, File)

San Francisco supervisors voted unanimously Tuesday to approve health warnings on ads for sugary sodas and some other drinks, saying such

beverages contribute to obesity, diabetes and other health problems.

It's believed that San Francisco would be the first place in the country to require such a warning on ads for soda if it receives a second approval from the Board of Supervisors next week and the mayor does not veto it.

The ordinance defines sugar-sweetened beverages as drinks with more than 25 calories from sweeteners per 12 ounces. So advertising for such sodas as Coca-Cola Zero and other no-calorie drinks would not require a warning, but ads for regular Coca-Cola would.

The ordinance also requires warnings for other products such as sports and energy drinks, vitamin waters and iced teas that exceed the 25 calorie limit. Milk and 100 percent natural fruit and vegetable juice drinks are exempt.

The label for billboards and other ads would read: "WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay. This is a message from the City and County of San Francisco."

The ordinance would require the warning on print advertising within city limits —billboards, walls, taxis and buses. It would not apply to ads appearing in newspapers, circulars, broadcast outlets or the Internet.

Soda cans and bottles would not have to carry the warning.

Supervisors quickly approved the proposal with an 11-0 vote requiring the warning, as well as two other measures aimed at curbing sugary drink consumption.

One proposal would prohibit soda ads on city-owned property, much like San Francisco does with tobacco and alcohol. Another would prohibit

city funds from being used to buy soda.

"These are not harmless products that taste good," said Supervisor Scott Wiener, who authored the soda warning proposal. "These are products that are making people sick and we need to take action."

A 12-oz. can of regular Coke contains 140 calories, all from sugar. The can contains 39 grams of added sugar, which is about 9 teaspoons. One teaspoon of sugar has about 16 calories.

Liquid sugar is the new tobacco as far as some public health advocates are concerned. Berkeley approved a soda tax last year, the first in the country to do so, but San Francisco rejected one. Davis, a college town near Sacramento, is requiring restaurants to serve milk and water as the default drink with children's meals.

Mayor Ed Lee hasn't taken a position but said through a spokeswoman that he is open to educating people through warning labels on advertisements.

Opponents have said it's not fair to single out billboard advertising or sugary drinks.

Roger Salazar, a spokesman for CalBev, the state's beverage association, has said, "It's unfortunate the Board of Supervisors is choosing the politically expedient route of scapegoating instead of finding a genuine and comprehensive solution to the complex issues of obesity and diabetes."

About 32 percent of children and teens in San Francisco are overweight or obese, according to a 2012 study by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy and the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research. That figure is lower than Los Angeles, San Jose and Sacramento.

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