

More water, mom? H₂O is top kids' beverage in U.S.

September 13 2018, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—U.S. kids are drinking far more water than sodas and fruit

drinks, health officials say.

A new report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention finds that [water](#) accounts for almost half of kids' total beverage consumption.

And together, water and milk comprised about two-thirds of the beverages consumed by Americans aged 2 to 19 between 2013 and 2016.

The findings add to growing evidence that consumption of sodas and other sweet drinks—a big source of sugar in Americans' diets—has dropped in the past decade.

"It is good news that kids are consuming less [sugar-sweetened beverages](#) and more water and milk, including plant-based milks," said Samantha Heller, a senior clinical nutritionist at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York City.

Most sugar-sweetened drinks are nutritionally bankrupt and contribute to obesity in children and teens, she said.

However, gender and ethnicity play a role in determining what kids drink, the researchers found.

Soda, for example, made up 30 percent of daily beverages consumed by [black children](#) and teens compared to 22 percent for Hispanics, 18 percent for whites and just 9 percent among Asians, the findings showed.

In addition, the report noted that boys were somewhat more likely to drink milk and less likely to drink water than girls.

According to lead researcher Kirsten Herrick, "Beverage consumption is

not the same for all U.S. youth." Herrick is an epidemiologist at the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS).

"Since beverages contribute to hydration, energy, and vitamin and mineral intake, these choices can impact diet quality and total caloric intake," Herrick said.

For the study, the researchers used data from the U.S. National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, 2013-2016.

Overall, the researchers found that water accounted for nearly 44 percent of all the beverages consumed. That was followed by milk (22 percent), soda (20 percent), 100-percent fruit juice (7 percent) and other drinks (8 percent).

As children age, they drink less milk and juice but more water and soda, the researchers found.

In terms of ethnicity/race, water comprised over 55 percent of fluids consumed by Asian children, versus 38 percent among black children and 40 percent among Hispanic kids. For white kids, the figure was 46 percent.

Heller said that "the disparity among race is disturbing, but not surprising, since research has found that there is aggressive marketing of sugar-sweetened beverages to younger people, especially black and Hispanic youths."

A Yale University study found that in 2013, black children and teens saw more than twice as many television ads for sugary drinks than white kids, she said.

"Parents can help shield kids by limiting screen time, encouraging more

physical activity and having healthy beverages, snacks and foods on hand," Heller suggested.

The increase in consumption of water and milk is a step in the right direction, she said, adding that healthy beverages should be part of an overall healthful diet.

Such a diet should include vegetables like spinach and broccoli, whole grains like brown rice and barley, beans such as soy and lentils, and nuts and fruits. Ideally, these should take the place of fast and highly processed foods, such as French fries, burgers, pizza, chips and desserts, Heller said.

The researchers noted that 100-percent juice, while nutritious, lacks fiber and can add too many calories when consumed in excess.

The report was published Sept. 13 in the CDC's *NCHS Data Brief*.

More information: Kirsten Herrick, Ph.D., epidemiologist, National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Samantha Heller, M.S., R.D., senior clinical nutritionist, NYU Langone Medical Center, New York City; Sept. 13, 2018, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *NCHS Data Brief*

For more on healthy drinks, visit the [Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health](#).

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Citation: More water, mom? H2O is top kids' beverage in U.S. (2018, September 13) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-09-mom-h2o-kids-beverage.html>

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