

Tools and education can reduce sugary drink consumption for low-income Latino families

September 23 2022



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As the White House prepares for the first conference on hunger, nutrition and health in more than 50 years, public health officials point out that providing access to safe potable drinking water must be part of

the national conversation.

Low income and minority populations in the US are less likely to drink plain water and also have negative perceptions about tap water, which has been associated with consuming high sugar beverages. This can lead to [health issues](#) ranging from cavities to having a higher Body Mass Index and risks factors for diabetes.

Two new studies from the George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health now suggest that providing [low-income families](#) with a low cost water filter pitcher to use at home increases their water consumption and decreases their consumption of sugary drinks.

"These findings are the first to confirm, in an [intervention study](#), that providing access to affordable, safe, palatable tap water in the US can significantly reduce sugary drink intake among low income families," Uriyoán Colón-Ramos, associate professor at the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health and senior author on both papers, said.

"We already know that drinking water is good for you, but these findings now suggest that water security is a major factor when considering healthy lifestyle interventions for lower income and minority populations."

In the first study, Colón-Ramos and her colleagues studied 92 parents of infants/toddlers who participated in Early Head Start programs that serve predominantly Hispanic low-income communities in the Washington DC metro area. The team found that when given a water filter, even with no other interventions, families were more likely to begin drinking more water and significantly lowered their consumption of sugary drinks.

Families that received a water filter plus a 12 week educational and motivational intervention to replace sugary drinks and fruit juice with filtered [tap water](#), also significantly reduced their sugary drink intake and their consumption of fruit juice.

In the second study, Colón-Ramos and her colleagues focused on explaining how the low-cost water filter pitcher helped parents reduce their consumption of sugar sweetened beverages and increase their water intake.

The team conducted in-depth interviews and found that using the water filter improved the flavor of water from the tap and increased parents' perceptions of water safety. With safe and palatable drinking water at home parents did not feel they had to buy bottled water and ration water consumption as before. The increase in [water consumption](#) replaced the intake of other beverages, such as sugary drinks, fruit juice and sports drinks.

"We already knew that drinking potable water is good for you. The United Nations says that access to sufficient, safe, acceptable, physically accessible, and affordable water is a basic human right. What we did not know is that when that human right is violated or when access to it is inconsistent, which can happen and is happening in communities in the US, this can significantly contribute to individuals choosing to drink sugary beverages," Colón-Ramos explained.

"This research demonstrates that [nutritional status](#) and dietary behaviors can significantly improve family health habits –and these early life nutritional practices may have a profound lifetime effect on children," William Dietz, Chair of the Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness, which helped fund the studies, said. "Public health practitioners always seek affordable and accessible interventions to improve [health outcomes](#), and these studies provide us with insights that

can be more broadly applied to reduce sugary drink intake."

The first study was published in the *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics*. The second study was published in *Public Health Nutrition*.

More information: Amanda C. Reese et al, Use of a Water Filter at Home Reduces Sugary Drink Consumption among Parents and Toddlers in a Predominantly Hispanic Community: Results from the Water Up!@Home Intervention Trial, *Journal of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics* (2022). [DOI: 10.1016/j.jand.2022.06.006](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jand.2022.06.006)

Claudia Santillán-Vázquez et al, How providing a low-cost water filter pitcher led Latino parents to reduce sugar-sweetened beverages and increase their water intake: explanatory qualitative results from the Water Up!@Home intervention trial, *Public Health Nutrition* (2022). [DOI: 10.1017/S1368980022001744](https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980022001744)

Provided by George Washington University

Citation: Tools and education can reduce sugary drink consumption for low-income Latino families (2022, September 23) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-09-tools-sugary-consumption-low-income-latino.html>

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