

# Many teens switch from hi-cal sodas to hi-cal sports drinks

7 May 2018, by Steven Reinberg, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—Teens who were once hooked on sugary sodas may now be now turning to sugary sports drinks, a new study reveals.

While soda's popularity declines, the number of U.S. high school students who drank sports drinks at least once per week actually rose slightly, from 56 percent in 2010 to nearly 57 percent in 2015.

The good news is that, over the same period, those who drank one or more sports drinks *daily* did fall a bit—from 16 percent to just under 14 percent, the researchers found.

"Still, about 10 percent of kids who are not physically active are [drinking](#) these daily," said lead researcher Dr. Andrew Adesman. He is chief of the division of pediatrics at Long Island Jewish Medical Center in New Hyde Park, N.Y.

"So for some kids, sports drinks are clearly a beverage of choice not related to [physical activity](#)," he said.

Adesman isn't sure whether marketing accounts for the increase in weekly consumption, or if kids think these drinks are healthier than sodas.

"Not everyone who wears sportswear is athletic, and not everyone who drinks sports drinks is physically active," he said.

Popular sports drinks include Gatorade, Powerade, All-Sport, Hydrafuel and 1st Ate.

Sports drinks, in addition to sugars and flavorings, contain electrolytes and carbohydrates, and are designed to restore energy and fluids.

Electrolytes are minerals necessary for the normal functioning of body cells, especially heart muscle, and include potassium, chloride, calcium, magnesium and phosphate.

As you sweat during exercise or while playing sports, the body loses electrolytes, which sports drinks help replenish.

"Parents and teens need to recognize, however, that sports drinks are not necessary, even if you are having routine physical activity. Water is probably the best thing," Adesman suggested.

"We don't need empty calories and [we] don't need the electrolyte or other additives that are part of sports drinks," he said.

But the American Beverage Association noted that the new study "does not show that sports drinks are uniquely causing weight gain."

The association said in a statement that "sport drinks are intended to help promote hydration and support an athlete's performance during exercise. And America's beverage companies offer a wide variety of choices—including sport drinks in smaller portions and with reduced, low and no calories or sugar."

In the new study, Adesman's team found that the number of sports drinks consumed by obese children did not decrease. In addition, the number of teens who drank sports drinks increased significantly among those who watched two or more hours of TV daily.

Sports drinks were most popular among boys, Hispanics and blacks, the findings showed.

Samantha Heller is a senior clinical nutritionist at New York University Medical Center. She said, "Sports drinks are specifically designed to replenish carbohydrates, fluids and electrolytes for people exercising for 60 to 90 minutes at moderate to high intensity, or engaging in multiple training sessions or competitions in a day."

For these purposes, [sports drinks](#) can play an important role, she said.

"Sports drinks, however, are not meant for consumption while watching sporting events," Heller said.

This study highlights the need to limit screen time for kids and adults of all ages, as well as the need to encourage healthy eating habits, she added.

"We should be drinking water, seltzer, unsweetened teas and herbal infusions, such as peppermint or chamomile, instead of sugar-sweetened beverages," Heller advised.

Research has found that people who regularly consume [sugary drinks](#) have a 26 percent greater risk of developing type 2 diabetes, and increased risks for heart disease and obesity, she pointed out.

"There is no reason for children, teens or adults to drink sugary beverages every day," Heller said.

For the study, Adesman and colleagues collected data on more than 11,000 teens who responded to the 2010 National Youth Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey, and more than 11,300 who responded to the 2015 Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

The report was published online May 7 in the

journal *Pediatrics*.

**More information:** Andrew Adesman, M.D., chief, division of pediatrics, Long Island Jewish Medical Center, New Hyde Park, N.Y.; Samantha Heller, M.S., R.D., senior clinical nutritionist, New York University Medical Center, New York City; May 7, 2018, statement, American Beverage Association; May 7, 2018, *Pediatrics*, online. [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

Central Washington University has more about [sugar in sports drinks](#).

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