

Sugary Drinks

Approaches to Reduce Sugary Drink Consumption

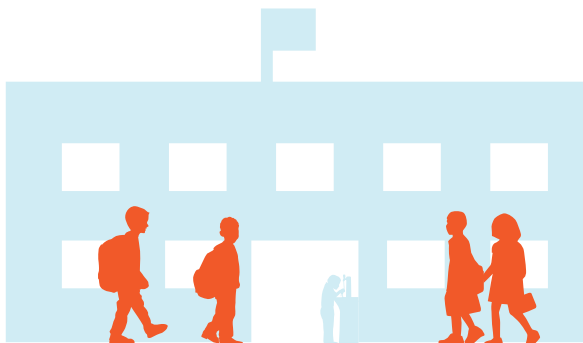
Studies show a link between obesity and the consumption of soda and other sugary drinks, and many public health leaders see limiting the availability of sugary drinks – especially among youth – as an important obesity prevention strategy. Sugary drinks offer little or no nutritional value but contain massive quantities of added sugars, and their consumption is associated with a number of adverse health effects, including type 2 diabetes, heart disease and obesity.



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o help diminish the health and economic costs of obesity, local governments and institutions can implement a range of strategies aimed at limiting the consumption of sugary drinks. A common question from public health professionals around the State is: where do we start? This guide provides a starting point for ideas and a potential path to reduce sugary drink consumption and improve health. We provide eight strategies for communities.

In general, communities and states begin with voluntary strategies and then work their way up to restricting the availability of sugary drinks. While no single approach will substantially reduce sugary drink consumption or radically improve health, widespread adoption of the strategies listed in this guide will create environments where people can make healthier choices. To implement these strategies effectively, it will be necessary to engage multiple stakeholders and ensure that the right partners help advance the work.



School Strategies

California law limits sales of most sugary drinks in public schools. However, California still allows two sugary drinks to be sold during the school day and shortly before and after school: flavored (e.g., chocolate) milk in elementary, middle and high schools and sports drinks in middle and high schools. School districts can go further than state law, for example, by not allowing any sugary drinks to be sold at any time of day, or by prohibiting the sale of sports drinks and flavored milk to students during the school day. Ideally, public health professionals will partner with school district representatives and other school stakeholders to establish strict district-wide standards. However, sometimes it may be necessary to start at the level of an individual school and change practices school-by-school to build momentum toward a district-wide policy.

Marketing Restrictions at Schools

Schools have broad authority to control commercial messages on their campuses, and school districts can approve a district wide policy that addresses food and beverage marketing and advertising on school property. Districts could ban:

1. all advertising on campus,
2. the advertising of all foods or beverages on campus, or
3. the advertising of foods and beverages that the district does not allow to be sold on campus.

Because the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution limits the government from imposing certain restrictions on speech, concerns can emerge when a public school district (a government entity) limits food and beverage company advertising. But the First Amendment should not stand in the way of carefully worded advertising restrictions on public school property. For more information about restricting food and beverage advertising on school grounds, visit www.changelabsolutions.org.





Child Care and After School Restrictions

Many restrictions on sugary drink sales on school grounds are limited to the school day, but districts also can restrict sugary drink sales after school so the rules address school-based child care and after school programs, and even athletic events, for example. While child care settings in California are primarily regulated at the state level, there are some ways that local leaders can encourage the availability of healthy products in that setting. California state law prohibits child care centers and licensed family childcare providers from serving sugary drinks, but towns and counties can go further by instituting nutrition standards for unlicensed child care settings, such as by using quality rating systems to incentivize better nutrition practices.

Drinking Water Access

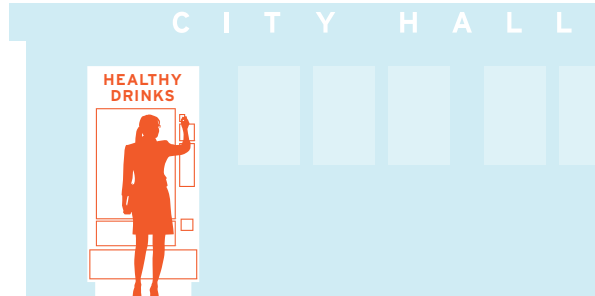


Fresh drinking water is an important alternative to sugary drinks, and making it widely available remains one of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) core recommendations for reducing sugary drink consumption. But

access to fresh drinking water is not as widespread as it could be. Some studies have suggested that if fresh drinking water is not readily available, then consumers may substitute sugary drinks for the water they would prefer to drink.

California state law requires school districts to provide free, fresh drinking water during meal times in school food service areas. A school district may comply with this law by, among other means, providing cups and containers of water or installing a water fountain or hydration station. Communities can implement a

variety of approaches to further increase access to fresh drinking water. They can commission a gaps analysis to determine where water fountains may be lacking and require communities and school districts to ensure that fresh drinking water is available at all times, including at meal times.



Government Purchasing

Public institutions can implement "healthy vending" and other procurement strategies to encourage more nutritious alternatives to sugary drinks. Vending agreements could require that a minimum percentage of products offered in machines on government-owned property meet certain nutritional standards. Government procurement standards also can reduce sugary drink consumption, for example, by requiring that only healthy beverage options are provided at city meetings and events, or by setting nutrition standards for beverages served as part of onsite food services or at commissaries, trainings, conferences, waiting areas, and lobbies. Because many communities may have existing contracts with sugary drink manufacturers or distributors that specify a certain amount of sugary drink procurement, especially for vending machines, the most effective approach may be to wait until the existing contracts are expired before changing the terms. Communities should, however, encourage vendors to proactively adopt the standards before the end of the contract term.

Learn More About CA4Health

CA4Health is the Public Health Institute's 5-year Community Transformation Grant, funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, that is focused on reducing the burden of chronic disease in California counties with populations under 500,000. CA4Health partners with some of the state's leading technical assistance providers and content experts to provide local county partners with tools, training and guidance to make their communities healthier.

CA4Health's four strategic directions are reducing consumption of sugary beverages, increasing availability of smoke-free housing, creating safe routes to schools, and providing people with chronic disease with skills and resources to better manage their health.

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Licensing Retailers

In many communities, certain types of businesses – like tobacco retailers and restaurants – require a special license and must meet specific standards of operation for public health or other reasons. Nutrition experts have begun looking at licensing as a tool for increasing access to healthy food. Minneapolis, for example, has adopted a food retailer licensing ordinance that requires licensed grocery stores (including convenience or corner stores) to stock minimum amounts of staple foods: fruits and vegetables, protein, bread or cereal, and dairy. This type of “healthy food retailer” licensing law also could place restrictions on sugary drink sales and encourage the sale of healthier beverages.



Screening and Counseling

Given the large number of Americans seen by doctors and dentists each year, incorporating screening and counseling around sugary drinks into routine medical and dental appointments could be a powerful part of an awareness campaign about the risks of sugary drink consumption.

To learn more about these approaches, visit www.changelabsolutions.org & www.CA4Health.org.

See the ChangeLab Solutions Smoke-Free Multi-Unit Housing resource page for research and analysis supporting these strategies. www.changelabsolutions.org/childhood-obesity/SSB-regulation

Communities can work with local dental associations and foundations to develop specific outreach campaigns that target medical and dental providers. With resources made available through initiatives like these, providers can offer patients referrals and counseling that discourages sugary drink consumption.



Voluntary Organizational Policies

Many private sector organizations, like corporations and nonprofits, can voluntarily implement strategies aimed at reducing their own consumption of sugary drinks. These policies could include vending and catering rules that prohibit the purchase of sugary drinks, or policies that promote healthier beverages like water, non-fat/low-fat milk, or zero-to-low calorie drinks in common dining areas, at meetings and events. A wellness program could provide support for these strategies by promoting healthier beverages and decreased sugary drink consumption. These changes could reduce insurance premiums or prompt rebates for certain health care costs.