

BACKGROUND PAPER

EXPLORING THE LINK BETWEEN SUGAR-SWEETENED DRINKS AND OBESITY

Joint Hearing
Senate Select Committee on Obesity and Diabetes
Senator Alex Padilla, Chair

~~A~~and

Senate Health Committee
Senator Alquist, Chair

The Select Committee on Obesity and Diabetes ~~as well as~~and the Senate Health Committee will conduct a hearing to explore the link between sugar-sweetened drinks and obesity.

According to a recent UCLA study in California, ~~62%~~ percent of adolescents ages 12-17 and ~~41%~~ percent of children ages 2-11 drink at least one soda or other sweetened beverage every day. In addition, ~~24%~~ percent of adults drink at least one soda or other sweetened beverage on an average day.

~~The prevalence of overweight and obesity~~The percentage of those classified as obese or overweight nearly tripled among 12-19 year olds and more than quadrupled among 6-11 year olds in the last three decades.

Among children aged ~~s~~ 2-18, the percentage of calories consumed from sweetened beverages more than doubled between 1977 and 2001.

According to ~~the a~~ UCLA study, in California ~~In California,~~ ~~56%~~ percent of adults and ~~30%~~ percent of adolescents are either overweight or obese. ~~The prevalence of overweight and obesity is~~ Obesity rates are higher among adults and adolescents who drink soda than among those who don't.

Obesity crosses all ethnic and socioeconomic lines in the U.S. No group—young or old, rich or poor—has escaped this epidemic. However, African-~~r~~ Americans, Latinos and Native Americans are disproportionately affected.

It is not the intent of the State Legislature to presume that sugar-sweetened drinks are the sole cause of the obesity epidemic; however, it is important to examine the facts that are available and come to a ~~responsible-reasonable~~ conclusion.

Sugar-sweetened drinks may not be the only factor regarding the rise in obesity. A poor diet, lack of exercise, and increased food portions ~~sizes~~ also play a large role. However, it cannot be ignored that while soda consumption has increased so has the rate of obesity in California and throughout the nation.

The fact that soda is cheaper to purchase than water or milk and therefore more affordable to low income families is troubling.

Soda consumption is associated with poverty and race/ethnicity; lower income people and people of color tend to drink more soda. These same groups also tend to be at higher risk for obesity.

According to a study produced by the University of California, Berkley, ~~the~~ targeted marketing of “empty calorie” foods to low-income and minority populations has also been implicated as a factor to the obesity epidemic.

The same study also states that sweetened beverages are heavily promoted on television, websites, games, and product placement agreements, and such marketing has been increasing over the time period in which consumption and obesity have increased.

In addition, a number of studies have found that greater consumption of sweetened beverages is associated with ~~increased rates of obesity overweight and obesity~~ among both adults and children. Adult consumption of sweetened beverages has leveled off, and consequently we have seen a growth in children’s advertising.

California is the most ethnically diverse state in the nation. ~~According to the U.S. Census, with 36% percent of the population is Latino, and 43% percent is Non-Hispanic Whites, and the remaining 21% percent includes African-Americans, Asians, people of mixed race, and a variety of other ethnic groups according to a 2008 U.S. Census.~~

Obesity increases the risk of diabetes, heart disease, certain types of cancer, arthritis, asthma and breathing problems. Depending on their level of obesity, from 60% percent to over 80% percent of obese adults have type-2 diabetes, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, or other related conditions.

~~Soda, because Since~~ it is the largest beverage source of calories in the American diet, ~~soda~~ has likely contributed more than other sweetened beverages to the obesity epidemic. In recognition of ~~this~~ growing ~~body of~~ evidence ~~in support of supporting~~ the link between obesity and sweetened beverages, researchers and health professionals are beginning to make recommendations for dramatically reducing sweetened beverage consumption, particularly among children.

This joint hearing is meant to explore whether a link between sugar-sweetened beverages and obesity exists, and to identify policy options for further addressing the obesity epidemic.