

# Key Issue: Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

The State of California established “decreasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages” (SSBs) as one of six objectives in the [2010 California Obesity Prevention Plan: A Vision for Tomorrow, Strategic Actions for Today](#).

The 2010 Plan also set forth specific strategies to curtail consumption of SSBs:

- Work toward adoption of state and local policies that limit access to sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Establish nutrition standards for foods and beverages available in government-run recreation centers, parks, and other public facilities that limit access to calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods and beverages.
- Ensure that workplace policies address foods and beverages in the cafeteria, at meetings and events, and in vending machines.
- Eliminate the sale of electrolyte replacement beverages, commonly known as sports drinks, during the school day in public middle and high schools.

To ensure that California consumers have the opportunity to make informed beverage choices, a number of state and local efforts focus on education, access and sustainable funding:

- **Education:** *Public education* initiatives highlight the obesity-link for SSBs and the risk of dental decay. They also educate consumers about how to read product labels, and encourage consumers to use their knowledge to make healthy beverage choices.
- **Access:** Several public health initiatives are underway to change *local policy and practice* in schools, workplaces and other *environments* to ensure that healthy beverage choices are available to consumers.
- **Sustainable Funding:** Some public health leaders are advocating fees or taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages to generate revenues to fund healthy eating and physical activity programs.

## Research Highlighted in the 2010 California Obesity Prevention Plan

- One analysis of food intake data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) found that soft drinks are the single largest contributor of calorie intake in the United States.
- Mixed, but growing, evidence from scientific studies indicates that greater consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) is associated with increasing weight gain, diabetes, and obesity.
- SSBs are among the least expensive source of calories in the marketplace.
- Supermarket soft drink brands are particularly cheap, often as low as 28 cents per quart, but even popular brand names may be available for about 33 cents per quart when on sale. Milk costs two to three times as much, at about 75 to 95 cents per quart.

*Source:* California Department of Public Health, California Obesity Prevention Program. (2010). *California Obesity Prevention Plan: A Vision for Tomorrow, Strategic Actions for Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/COPP/Documents/COPP-ObesityPreventionPlan-2010.pdf.pdf>

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## Notable initiatives focused on SSBs include:

The [California Campaign for Healthy Beverages](#) is led by the California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA), in partnership with California Food Policy Advocates (CFPA) and with support from Berkeley Media Studies Group. This initiative educates at-risk communities and offers technical assistance to cities and counties to adopt policies to limit the availability of SSBs, increase access to safe drinking water, and increase support for breastfeeding at workplace and public facilities.

The campaign also encourages adoption of state policies to make workplace, school, child care and other environments more conducive to healthy beverage choices, and advocates for a soda tax that researchers predict would decrease SSB consumption and raise \$1.7 billion per year to promote healthy eating and physical activity in schools and communities.

[Water in Schools](#), a campaign directed by CFPA and linked to the Campaign for Healthy Beverages, is based on the rationale that access to safe drinking water in schools is one way to offer students a low-calorie alternative to SSBs. Forty percent of schools in one recent study did not offer free drinking water during school meal times. To address this situation, then-Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law [SB 1413](#) in 2010 which requires schools to provide free, fresh drinking water to students during meal times. CFPA's *Water in Schools* campaign developed a web-based tool kit that helps school districts and schools comply with state law.

The [Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign](#) (HEAL) is a partnership between CCPHA and the League of California Cities. The Campaign provides technical assistance to California cities to adopt policies to improve the physical activity and food environments for city residents and employees. Work to limit consumption of SSBs is integrated into three components of the HEAL campaign: 1) employee wellness policies, 2) ensuring healthy snack choices, and 3) establishing healthy practices for meetings. Many of the approximately 80 cities that have joined the campaign have identified employee wellness, including nutrition standards, as policy goals.

[ReThink Your Drink](#) is a public education campaign inspired by and built from the Soda Free Summer initiative first developed by the Alameda County Health Department and then widely publicized by the Santa Clara County Public Health Department and the Bay Area Nutrition and Physical Activity Collaborative (known as BANPAC).

*ReThink Your Drink* projects occurring throughout California include:

- Through the [Network for a Healthy California](#) based at the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), 9 of 11 *Regional Network* Collaboratives have adopted *ReThink Your Drink* as a priority nutrition education initiative.

The efforts target SNAP-Ed eligible families and the health, education and social service providers who serve them. The campaign supports the *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* by promoting water, low-fat and non-fat milk, and 100% juice as the beverages of choice among low-income audiences of all ages.

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- **[California Project LEAN](#)** (Leaders Encouraging Activity and Nutrition), also based at CDPH, received a Communities Putting Prevention to Work grant from the **[American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#)** (Recovery Act) for obesity prevention efforts. This grant supports educational efforts and policy and environmental changes that promote increased access to healthy beverages while reducing access to sugar-loaded drinks in school and community settings through policy initiatives, mini-grants, and a *ReThink Your Drink* media campaign launched in the Central Valley.

CPL is also providing oversight on the healthy eating and active living strategic direction for the Public Health Institute's statewide **[Community Transformation Grant](#)**. One of the policy priorities includes the adoption of local policies that limit access to sugary beverages.

- **[Choose Health LA](#)**, also known as Renew LA County, is an effort directed through the Los Angeles County Department of Health. As part of a comprehensive obesity prevention effort focused on environmental factors and involving 23 local partners, Renew LA County is working to increase the accessibility of healthy foods and beverages in communities with childhood obesity rates above the county average.
- **[Drink Water Said the Otter](#)** is a public health campaign to educate parents of young children on the importance of healthy beverage choices. It is also the title of a child-friendly book that promotes water in place of soda. The materials were developed by First 5 of Santa Clara County, in partnership with the Bay Area Nutrition & Physical Activity Collaborative (BANPAC).
- **[California WIC](#)** conducted a statewide *ReThink Your Drink* campaign from May through August 2011 that engaged 84 agencies throughout California. Over a million WIC participants learned about the sugar content of drinks, the importance of drinking water, how to read beverage labels, and how to convert grams of sugar to teaspoons. Participants also took a pledge to cut back on sweetened beverages.

The **[Center for Oral Health](#)** (COH) has a number of initiatives underway to provide children and youth with dental care and to prevent dental decay. Decreasing or limiting SSBs not only helps to decrease weight gain, it is also an essential strategy to preserve oral health and to reduce tooth decay. In partnership with the California School Boards Association, COH developed a **[Guide for School Districts](#)** and their partners, which showcases policies, practices and projects that promote oral health, including those that help curb consumption of SSBs. COH has also worked with WIC agencies to provide dental care for WIC participants and offer nutrition education, including information on the importance of limiting consumption of SSBs.

### **[Community Transformation Grants](#)**

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention announced in September 2011 that it awarded multi-year Community Transformation Grants (CTG) to support efforts to reduce chronic diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, stroke, and diabetes. The initiative will include a focus on healthy beverages. In California, the Public Health Institute received funds to work with the California Department of Public Health and assist 42 counties with populations under 500,000 residents, while eight large counties with populations exceeding a half million and one Indian Tribal Organization were also awarded CTG grants.

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## SSB RESOURCES:

**2010 California Obesity Prevention Plan: A Vision for Tomorrow, Strategic Actions for Today**  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/COPP/Documents/COPP-ObesityPreventionPlan-2010.pdf.pdf>

**California Campaign for Healthy Beverages (CCPHA)**  
[http://www.publichealthadvocacy.org/healthy\\_bev.html](http://www.publichealthadvocacy.org/healthy_bev.html)

**Water in Schools Campaign**  
<http://www.waterinschools.org/>

**Healthy Eating Active Living Cities Campaign (HEAL)**  
<http://healcitiescampaign.org>

**ReThink Your Drink/BANPAC**  
<http://www.banpac.org/>

**Network for a Healthy California**  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/CPNS/Pages/default.aspx>

**California Project LEAN ReThink Your Drink Campaign**  
<http://www.californiaprojectlean.org/ryd/default.html>

**Choose Health LA (Renew LA County)**  
[http://choosehealthla.com/?page\\_id=65](http://choosehealthla.com/?page_id=65)

**BANPAC Drink Water Says the Otter**  
[http://www.banpac.org/resources\\_sugar\\_savvy\\_drink\\_otter.htm](http://www.banpac.org/resources_sugar_savvy_drink_otter.htm)

see also: **First 5 Santa Clara County - Potter the Otter**  
[www.potterloveswater.com](http://www.potterloveswater.com)

**California WIC ReThink Your Drink Campaign**  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Pages/WICRethinkYourDrink.aspx>

**Center for Oral Health**  
<http://www.centerfororalhealth.org/programs>

**CDC Community Transformation Grants**  
[www.cdc.gov/communitytransformation](http://www.cdc.gov/communitytransformation)

### **See also:**

Resources from the [National Policy and Legal Analysis Network](#), a program of Public Health Law and Policy, including: [Breaking Down the Chain: A Guide to the Soft Drink Industry](#)

Online resource – [www.fewersugarydrinks.org](http://www.fewersugarydrinks.org) – developed by **The Center for Science in the Public Interest**

**Centers for Disease Control web page on ReThink Your Drink**  
[http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy\\_eating/drinks.html](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/healthy_eating/drinks.html)

**Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity**  
<http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/>

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## FOR MORE INFORMATION

This key issue on sugar-sweetened beverages is one component of *Understanding Nutrition: A Primer on Programs and Policies in California*. Go to [www.ccrwf.org](http://www.ccrwf.org) to access additional modules.

The primer was produced by the California Center for Research on Women and Families (CCRWF), in partnership with California Food Policy Advocates and the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California (Network)*, a public health effort working with hundreds of partners and organizations to empower low-income Californians to live healthier lives through good nutrition and physical activity.

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## RECOMMENDED CITATION

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