

# Banning sugar-sweetened beverages in schools does not reduce consumption: study

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State policies banning all sugar-sweetened beverages in schools are associated with reduced in-school access and purchase of these beverages, however these policies are not associated with a reduction in overall consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, according to a report published Online First by *Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine*.

"In the past 25 years, sources of energy intake among youth have shifted toward greater consumption of sugar-sweetened [beverages](#), such as soda, sports drinks, and high-calorie fruit drinks," the authors write as background information in the study. "The Institute of Medicine recommended that all sugar-sweetened beverages be banned in schools, but many state competitive food policies have focused primarily on soda while allowing sports drinks, fruit drinks and other sugar-sweetened beverages."

Daniel R. Taber, Ph.D., M.P.H., and colleagues from the University of Illinois at Chicago, examined state policies that banned all sugar-sweetened beverages in schools compared with states that banned only soda or had no beverage policy for in-school purchases to determine whether these policies were associated with reduced in-school access and purchase of sugar-sweetened beverages. The authors also sought to determine if these policies were associated with reduced overall consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages among adolescents.

The analysis included 6,900 students from public schools in 40 states, who were sampled during their fifth and eighth grade years (Spring 2004 and 2007, respectively) and had completed questionnaires about their in-school access to and purchase of sugar-sweetened beverages, as well as their overall consumption of sugar-sweetened

beverages. The authors found that the proportion of students who reported in-school sugar-sweetened beverage access and purchasing were similar in states that banned only soda (66.6 percent and 28.9 percent) compared with states with no beverage policy (66.6 percent and 26 percent, respectively).

Overall, sugar-sweetened beverage consumption was not associated with state policy as the authors found that in each policy category, approximately 85 percent of students reported consuming sugar-sweetened beverages at least once in the past seven days, and 26 percent to 33 percent of students reported daily consumption. Additional analysis indicated that overall consumption had only a modest association with in-school sugar-sweetened beverage access.

"To summarize, state policies regulating beverages sold in middle schools were associated with reduced in-school sugar-sweetened beverage access and purchasing only if they banned all sugar-sweetened beverages," the authors write. "Access and purchasing were equivalent in states that banned only soda compared with those with no policy at all. However, even comprehensive sugar-sweetened beverage policies were not associated with overall [consumption](#) of sugar-sweetened beverages, which was largely independent of students' in-school sugar-sweetened beverage access."

"Our study adds to a growing body of literature that suggests that to be effective, school-based policy interventions must be comprehensive," the authors conclude. "States that only ban soda, while allowing other beverages with added caloric sweeteners, appear to be no more successful at reducing adolescents' sugar-sweetened beverage access and purchasing within school than states that take

no action at all."

**More information:** *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.*

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