

Study finds soft drinks present in the home drive up consumption in school children

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(Medical Xpress)—Primary and secondary school students are five times as likely to be high consumers of sugar-sweetened drinks, such as soft drinks, if these drinks are available in their homes, according to a University of Sydney study published in the journal *Preventive Medicine* today.

The study, which used data from the 2010 [New South Wales Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey \(SPANS\)](#), found alarming levels of soft drink [consumption](#) in school aged children, especially those with easy access to these drinks.

Half (52 percent) of the 8058 students surveyed were boys and 59 percent were [high school students](#). The authors of the study found students were more likely to be high consumers of [soft drinks](#) if they were from a lower socio-economic background or were boys.

Lead author and accredited practising dietitian, Lana Hebden from Sydney Medical School said the study indicated strong associations between [school students'](#) access to soft drinks at school or in the home and increased consumption. "We also found students who drank soft drink with meals at home were almost 10 times as likely to be high consumers of these drinks," she said.

"Parents need to consider what is stored in their cupboards or fridge and what their children have access to."

The authors also found students who usually purchased soft drinks from their school canteen were three times as likely to be high consumers.

"While there is a mandate from 2007 that schools should not sell sugar-sweetened drinks, such as soft drinks, at school, this policy is not monitored or policed," Ms Hebden said.

"Primary and [secondary schools](#) should be

supported and encouraged to follow policy guidelines in their state regarding bans on the sale of sugar-sweetened drinks from the school canteen and [vending machines](#).

"Reducing consumption of soft drinks has been a focus of public health nutrition strategies internationally. These drinks provide substantial kilojoules/calories, but little further nutrition. Consumption of these drinks has been associated with body weight gain in youth, dental caries in young children and elevated blood pressure, insulin resistance and lower bone mineral density in adolescents."

The study authors call for clear information to be made available to parents on limiting their children's access to sugar-sweetened drinks at home. This includes only buying these drinks for special occasions, not keeping them in the fridge or pantry, not offering them to children with their meals regularly, and replacing them with more nutritious drink options, such as water or reduced fat milks. Other strategies such as taxes on sugar sweetened drinks may also help to discourage the consumption of these drinks.

Provided by University of Sydney

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