

American Heart Association comments on sugar-sweetened beverage taxes to address obesity

6 November 2013

The American Heart Association issued the following comments on a recent article published by the *British Medical Journal* focusing on a [study](#) of the impact of sugar sweetened drink taxes:

"The American Heart Association supports a multi-pronged approach to address obesity across our nation. We must make it easier for Americans to choose affordable nutritious foods and beverages by making them more accessible. This includes creating and implementing new policies that provide healthier options as well as efforts to educate all Americans on nutrition.

The American Heart Association advocates that communities should increase the availability of healthy drinks and decrease the availability of unhealthy drinks. The economic model used for this study from the *British Medical Journal*, and the existing evidence, provides policymakers a compelling case to enact targeted sugar-sweetened beverage taxes of at least one penny per ounce. This will help further evaluate the impact of price on the consumption of [sugary drinks](#). Many published economic models have demonstrated the potential benefit of a penny-per-ounce tax on sugary drinks. Once states and cities enact such policies, we need thorough evaluation to see the real world impact on consumer purchasing, consumption of sugary drinks, industry response and health outcomes. Mexico's effort provides an excellent starting point, but we need U.S. states and communities to enact the tax as well. We agree with the new study's conclusion that calls for more substantial beverage taxes so that real world evidence can demonstrate their effectiveness at curbing sugary drink consumption and improving the health of Americans of all ages.

It is well-established that sugar-sweetened beverages are the number one source of added

sugars in the American diet. A 12-ounce can of regular soda contains about 130 calories and 8 teaspoons of sugar. Consumption of sugary drinks has increased 500 percent in the past 50 years and now is the single largest category of caloric intake in children, surpassing milk a decade ago. Children take in 10 to 15 percent of their total daily calories from sugary drinks. We recommend low- and no-calorie beverages such as water, unsweetened tea, diet soft drinks, and fat-free or low-fat milk as better choices than full-calorie soft drinks. In addition, Americans should try to limit the amount of added sugars in all the foods they eat.

We further advocate that state and local governments that generate revenue from beverage tax initiatives direct these funds toward public health and obesity education and prevention efforts with strong evaluation components."

More information: www.heart.org/obesitypolicy

Provided by American Heart Association

APA citation: American Heart Association comments on sugar-sweetened beverage taxes to address obesity (2013, November 6) retrieved 23 June 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2013-11-american-heart-association-comments-sugar-sweetened.html>

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