

# NETA Quarterly News

Nutrition, Physical Activity & Gardening for  
Early Childhood Providers



Volume 11, Issue 3 • April–June 2011

## Children's Drink of Choice?

**Y**oung Children, as early as 2 years old, are consuming large numbers of calories from drinking sugar-sweetened drinks. 33% of California children, 2 to 5 years old, drink soda daily, according to California Center for Public Health Advocacy (1).

While obesity is a complex problem, sugar drinks are the biggest source of added sugar and an important contributor of calories to children's diets (2). Children who consume soft drinks and other sweetened beverages daily increase their calories and are more likely to become overweight. Soda consumption is higher among Latino and African American preschoolers (1). A Harvard School of Public Health study found that for each additional serving of sugar-sweetened drink a child consumed per day, the child's chance of becoming obese increased by 60% (3).

Sugar drinks, such as soda, also displace healthier foods from children's diets, like milk (4), which is high in calcium and may reduce the risk of developing osteoporosis. Soda

consumption has also been linked to lower intakes of fruit and dietary fiber (4). Sugar can also be harmful to teeth (1).

For preschoolers, water is the best beverage choice when they are thirsty. It provides the fluid a child's body needs. Encourage children to drink from clean water fountains when they are playing outdoors or doing other physical activity, especially in hot weather. Help children learn to enjoy water as the thirst quencher of choice.

NETA is providing a series of training for teachers and parents about drinking water and ways to "Re-Think Your Drink." Check with your lead teacher and the NETA staff at your site.

Read the book "Drinking Water," by Mari C. Schuh during circle time. Discuss:

- Why does your body need water?
- Name some times when you should take extra care to drink plenty of water.
- Why is water a good thing to drink?



Photo: Will Suckow,  
UCANR Communication Services

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## References

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3. Ludwig DS, et. al. Lancet 357:505 (2001).
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## How Sweet It Is!

**W**hy do we consume so much sugar? Sugar, in many different forms, is added to a lot of our foods. In the 1960s scientists discovered how to make high fructose corn syrup (HFCS) from corn. It is cheaper than table sugar (sucrose), so it has become widely used in foods and beverages.

HFCS now accounts for about half of all sweeteners in the U.S. (1). In 2010, the average American ate 34.8 pounds of HFCS (2).

High fructose corn syrup is a popular ingredient in many foods, such as jelly, ketchup, canned goods, salad dressing, cookies, cereal, granola bars, bread, crackers, flavored yogurt, soda, fruit-flavored drinks, and other processed foods (3).

Research is still evolving about a correlation between increased consumption of HFCS and the rise in obesity over the last 30 years. A group of University of Maryland experts concluded that HFCS does not contribute to overweight any differently than other caloric foods (4). The important thing is to eat less of any kind of added sugar—whether it is high

fructose corn sugar, sucrose, honey, dextrose, malt and maple syrups, fructose, etc.

Regular sodas add the most sugar to a typical American's diet, in the form of high fructose corn syrup. So a good way to decrease sugar in children's diets

is to drink less soda and other sweetened beverages.



What can teachers do with this information? There is still a lot of controversy about the effects of too much sugar. You can help children become sugar detectives and find out:

- Many of our foods have sugar added. Use some the "Tips" and *Nutrition Matters!* classroom activities to show children how to use fresh produce in meals and snacks.
- Often children add more sugar to their bodies by drinking sugary drinks. Ask children to help you count 10 teaspoons of



sugar (or use 10 sugar cubes) which is the average amount of sugar in a 12-ounce sweetened drink container. That is a lot of sugar in 1 soda.

- Children often eat a snack high in sugar (such as breakfast or cereal bars, cereals, muffins, hot chocolate, and flavored yogurt). Show boxes or containers of some of those items to show that sugar is in many of the foods we eat.

What might be good to eat when hungry? Eating fresh fruits can help solve sweet cravings. Do a taste test, using the monthly "Tips for Busy Early Childhood Professionals," that highlights fruits and vegetables. Try one of the drinks on page 3 with your students.

### References

1. University of Florida IFAS Extension FCS8903. <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdf/files/FY/FY115500.pdf>
2. USDA, Table 52—High Fructose Corn Syrup. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/Briefing/Sugar/Data.htm#yearbook>
3. Duffey, KJ & Popkin, BM. *Am J Clin Nutr*:88(Supp):1722S (2008)
4. Forshee, R.A., et.al. *Crit Rev Food Sci Nutr* 47:561 (2007).



## Cool Drinks

Sweetened beverages are the largest single source of added sugar in the American diet (1). Preschool children average about 14-17 teaspoons of added sugar each day (2).

There are a number of great tasting, thirst-quenching water-based drinks using herbs you can grow in the garden (such as mint and parsley), as well as some common vegetables like cucumber. Some of the activities and

recipes included in the “*Tips for Busy Early Childhood Professionals*” have suggestions on how to make water drinks with fruit. Prepare some of these drinks with children and share these recipes with the families.

### References:

1. CDC, <http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/childhood/problem.html>
2. S. Kranz, et al. *J of Pediatrics* 146(1):105-111, January 2005



## Recipes

### MELON COOLER

Makes 4 servings.  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup per serving.

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups chopped melon (cantaloupe, honeydew, or watermelon)
- 2 cups cold water

#### Preparation

1. Place all ingredients in a blender container.
2. Blend until smooth. Pour into glasses and serve.

For a slushy cooler, simply blend ice with melon and water.

#### Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 27, Carbohydrate 7 g, Dietary Fiber 1 g, Protein 1 g, Total Fat 0 g, Saturated Fat 0 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 15 mg

#### Recipe from:

Healthy Latino Recipes. Made with Love. Champions for Change, Network for a Healthy California.

<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cpns/Documents/Network-FV-LC-HealthyLatinoRecipes.pdf>



### FRUIT JUICE SPRITZER

Makes 4 servings. 1 cup per serving. Make your own fizzy fruit drink for a healthy alternative to soda.

#### Ingredients

- 2 cups fruit juice (look for 100% fruit juice)
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice or 4 slices lemon
- 2 cups sparkling water
- Ice

#### Preparation

1. Combine fruit juice and lemon juice in a pitcher.
2. Slowly pour water down the inside of the pitcher.
3. Stir gently. Serve over ice.

#### Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 57, Carbohydrate 13 g, Dietary Fiber 0 g, Protein 1 g, Total Fat 0 g, Saturated Fat 0 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 1 mg

#### Recipe Adapted from:

Minnesota WIC Program, Healthy Families Food, Fun & Facts!  
<http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/wic/newwicfoods/ppt/foodfunfacts/recipes/beverages/index.html#fruit2>



### SPA WATER

Makes 6 servings. 1 cup per serving. Make this refreshing water drink to quench your thirst.

#### Ingredients

- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup cucumber, thinly sliced
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup fresh mint leaves
- 6 cups of cool water

#### Preparation

1. Fill a pitcher with the water.
2. Add the cucumber and mint leaves.
3. Chill in refrigerator and enjoy!

Variations: Try different combinations using thin slices of: lemon, lime, orange, grapefruit, apple, berries, melon, pineapple, and fresh ginger; fresh whole leaves or sprigs of: basil, rosemary, and parsley.

#### Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 3, Carbohydrate 1 g, Dietary Fiber 0 g, Protein 0 g, Total Fat 0 g, Saturated Fat 0 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 1 mg

#### Recipe Adapted from:

California WIC Program, ReThink Your Drink handout. <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/wicworks/Documents/RethinkYourDrink/WIC-RethinkYourDrink-Handout.pdf>



## Tips to Keep Children Active During the Summer

**O**akland Unified School District (OUSD) offers children a year-round program. Teachers have the opportunity to include some outdoor play activities that are fun and enjoyable. Being outdoors not only helps children develop their motor skills, social and emotional health, but they can become more confident when they have mastered some motor skills.

Summer offers a myriad of possibilities for children to learn and play. Summer play activities should be fun and enjoyable. Here are some simple things you can do in school.

- Provide a variety of equipment (balls, hoops, tricycles, scarves, and bean bags) and activities that spark enthusiasm and interest.
- Provide children with motor challenges. Introduce a new motor skill each day. Examples include, walk a straight line, jump, march, stand on one foot, and walk backwards. At the end of the week, set up an obstacle course using the skills children have already learned.
- Select activities that engage the children the most. Repetition allows children to become more competent and feel a sense of accomplishment. For example, shoot baskets using



a variety of containers and balls. Children can be challenged to balance on one foot, while tossing their ball into the container.

Some schools are close to a park.

Take children to a local park and let them experience the grass, flowers,

and trees. Moving children

from the playground to the park may inspire new skills and activities. Let them roll on the ground, jump like frogs, or better yet just let them run!

Photo: Network for a Healthy California



This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's *Network for a Healthy California* with funding from USDA SNAP, known in California as CalFresh (formerly Food Stamps). These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious foods for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit [www.cachampionsforchange.net](http://www.cachampionsforchange.net).

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