



Reducing Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Consumption in the U.S. – The Role of Government

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Introduction

The American Heart Association (AHA)/the American Stroke Association (ASA)

- 22.5 million volunteers and supporters**
- One of the largest volunteer science-based organizations in the world.**
- Since 1924, dedicated to reducing disability and death from cardiovascular disease and stroke – the #1 and now #4 leading causes of death in the U.S. – through research, education, community based programs, and advocacy.**

AHA's goal for 2020

- Improve the cardiovascular health of all Americans by 20 percent while reducing deaths from cardiovascular diseases and stroke by 20 percent.

Definition of Cardiovascular Health – Life's Simple 7

- **Never smoked or quit more than one year ago;**
- **Body mass index <25 kg/m²;**
- **Physical activity - at least 150 minutes (moderate intensity) or 75 minutes (vigorous intensity) each week;**
- **4-5 key components of a healthy diet**
- **Total cholesterol <200 mg/dL;**
- **Blood pressure <120/80 mm Hg;**
- **Fasting blood glucose <100 mg/dL.**

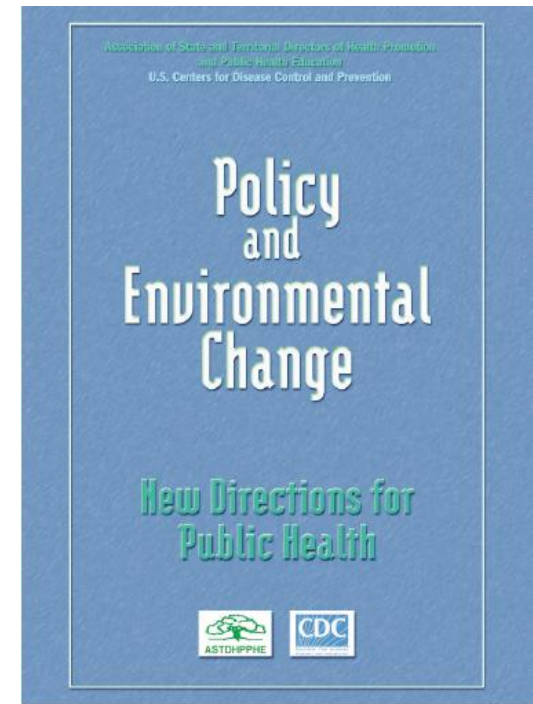
Current Strategic Priorities 2014-17

- Reduce tobacco use
- Increase fruit and vegetable consumption
- **Reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages**
- Reduce sodium in the food supply
- Increase physical activity
- Improve blood pressure control
- Improve post-event rehabilitation
- Improve systems of care



Policy and Environmental Change

- **“Health problems are heavily influenced by societal policies and environments that in some way either sustain the behaviors and practices that contribute to the problems or fail to foster healthier choices that could prevent the problems.**
- **The major public health problems of our time will not be solved solely by individual actions and health choices, but by individuals coming together to make our society one in which healthy choices are easy, fun, and popular.**
- **Communities in which policies and environments focus on the latter approach will be healthier and more satisfying places to live, work, and play.**



AHA's Approach to Advocacy

- Identify and aggressively advocate for policies that advance and support the mission, strategic priorities & health impact goals
- Serve as a credible, nonpartisan, evidence-based resource that public officials can rely for vital information relating to heart disease and stroke
- Influence policy at the federal, state and local levels



Reduce SSB Consumption

- **Support SSB Taxes**
- **Increase water subsidies**
- **Provide funding for placement and maintenance of water fountains or dispensers in public places**
- **Other disincentives/incentives for healthy beverages within government feeding programs, healthy vending, restaurants, hospital systems, schools, healthy food financing initiatives, and procurement standards**



Government and Industry

- Given the powerful impact of food and beverage companies, strong collaborations between governments and industry may help increase adoption of healthy eating habits in a larger percentage of the population.
- Companies have to be willing to improve the nutritional content and overall quality of their products, offer healthy food and beverage options that are affordable, and modify their advertising approaches and practices

The Role of Government

- Important for governments to recognize their role in protecting consumer health by implementing legislation and regulation that guides the food industry toward a healthy, safe food supply.
- Examples include implementing more robust nutrition standards for meals and competitive foods in schools, revision of the Nutrition Facts Panel, taxing less healthy foods/beverages or subsidizing the purchase of healthier foods such as fruits and vegetables.
- Mandated requirements may have more health impact and greater efficacy than voluntary initiatives that are implemented by the food and beverage industry often to fend off legislation or regulation.

Government's Role

- Government at the local, state and federal levels has an inherent and legitimate interest in protecting the health of the population and reducing the financial burden associated with chronic disease and poor health-related behaviors.
- Policy change with government can be through legislation, regulation, executive order, or local-level policy change.
- With the implementation of a single law or regulation, hundreds, thousands, and even millions of people can be positively impacted through systems and environmental transformations.

• Pomeranz JL, Brownell KD. Portion sizes and beyond--government's legal authority to regulate food-industry practices. *N Engl J Med* 2012;367:1383-5.

The Role of Government

- There are roles at the federal, state and local level for government to affect policy change.
- Local government officials including mayors, managers, commissioners, and council members at the city, town, township, or county level are often more directly connected to their constituents and can have a significant influence on planning, implementing, and refining programs or policies that address health in their communities.

Public/Private Partnerships

- Multi-sectorial initiatives and private/public partnerships can amplify the work of government, working with the private sector or other stakeholders to promote and sustain environment and systems change.
- Social enterprise funding is allowing foundations, private organizations or individuals to support or initiate efforts that seem to have public health impact and return on investment.
- If those efforts are successful, government can take that “proof of concept” and provide long-term funding and sustainability.
- Governments should then be evaluated for the impact of their publicly-funded initiatives and for their effort to support systems, environment, and behavior change over the long term.

Impact of Mexico's tax on Sugar-sweetened beverages

- SSB purchases fell 10.5
 - Mean estimated SSB reduction = 15-23kcal/day (varies by age group)
- Non-taxed purchases rose 7.2%
 - Plain waters rose 13.5%
 - No sig change for nontaxed carbonated drinks & other untaxed beverages (milks & 100% juices)
- Policy implications
 - Results show evidence to keep excise tax
 - Potential for 20% excise tax to have more meaningful effect



Popkin, B., et al., 2014.

Barriers to Government's Role

- Public perception of “nanny state” or intrusion into private spaces or individual rights.
- Delicate balance between a government's legal obligation to promote the public health and the importance of not trampling on individual freedoms or responsibilities.
- Immense pressure applied on government action by powerful lobbying groups. This can lead to loss of public trust in the actions of government.
- Different ends of the political spectrum address the ideal scope, power and competence of government to address key issues that affect the public well-being.
- Lack of congruence between long-term chronic disease prevention or health promotion and short-term timeline of election cycles.

Producers of sugar-sweetened drinks agree to reduce calorie consumption



Sept. 23, 2014 - Leading producers of sugar-sweetened drinks have entered a “landmark” agreement to reduce calories Americans consume in these beverages by 20 percent by 2025, President Bill Clinton, the Alliance for a Healthier Generation and beverage manufacturers announced.....

The Reality

- Consumption Patterns of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages in the United States

Euna Han, PhD; Lisa M. Powell, PhD

- The prevalence of heavy total SSB consumption (500 kcal/day) has increased among children (4% to 5%) although it has decreased significantly among adolescents (22% to 16%) and young adults (29% to 20%).

- Turning point for US diets? Recessionary effects or behavioral shifts in foods purchased and consumed

Shu Wen Ng, Meghan M Slining, and Barry M Popkin

- Shifts in caloric purchases were driven more by declines in caloric purchases from beverages than food.

- 2014 Mintel Report

- “Consumer Trends: Soda Drinkers Want Healthier Soft Drinks”

Industry is maximizing halo effect of the already downward trend working to minimize their losses in market share and offset the existing secular trends.

Mandated vs. Voluntary Initiatives

- **“Look under the hood” of voluntary initiatives**
- **Mandatory government action can extend voluntary initiatives and level the playing field for industry**
- **Mandatory government action can also create large-scale, sustained change and health impact**

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