

Parent Communications— Be Sugar Smart

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Sugar Is Sweet—and Drinks Are Too?

What is the largest source of added sugar in children's diets? It's not cake or candy—it is drinks sweetened with sugar! Children are drinking more soda, fruit drinks, punch, and sports drinks than ever before. The added sugars in these drinks provide little to no nutrients for growing bodies. Drinking sugar-sweetened drinks increases a child's chance of becoming overweight and getting dental cavities. Children (and parents!) often don't realize how much sugar is added to drinks. Teaching kids that sugary drinks are unhealthy can help them make healthier choices as they get older. With so many sugary products available, setting a good example at home is more important than ever. Be a good role model—don't serve sugar-sweetened drinks at home! What can you do to make sure your family is sugar smart?

- ▶ **Serve water.** Serve your children water during snack and meal times.
- ▶ **Do not buy drinks with added sugars.** Read the drink labels and buy drinks without added sugars. Sometimes sugar is listed as sucrose, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, or fruit juice from concentrate. Don't be fooled—they are all just sugar!
- ▶ **Set limits.** Limit the consumption of soda and other sugary drinks.
- ▶ **Skip the sports drinks.** Water is the best drink for active kids. Sports drinks are only helpful for intense activities that last longer than 1 hour. For example, a day at basketball camp or a hike in the mountains would be a time that kids might have a sports drink.
- ▶ **Try naturally sweet.** Serve drinks your kids could enjoy in the place of high-sugar options: add fresh fruit or a splash of 100% fruit juice to sparkling water for a refreshing drink.

For more information on healthy drinks, check out www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutrition-source/healthy-drinks/

From L.W.Y. Cheung, H. Dart, S. Kalin, B. Otis, and S.L. Gortmaker, 2016, *Eat Well & Keep Moving*, 3rd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics). Adapted, by permission, from *Food & Fun After School 2nd Edition Parent Communications*. ©2013 President and Fellows of Harvard College and YMCA of the USA.

(continued)

Optional e-mail message: Use this sample message to communicate with parents by e-mail (if available).

Subject Line: Healthy Habits Power Tips—Be Sugar Smart

Dear (insert school name and grade) Parents,

This week in the (insert school name and grade) *Eat Well & Keep Moving* program, your child will learn about the amount of sugar in some drinks, and how to make healthier drink choices. The key messages will be the following:

- ▶ Sweetened drinks like soda, fruit drinks, and sports drinks are loaded with sugar.
- ▶ Eating and drinking too much sugar is not healthy for your body and it can cause cavities.
- ▶ Water is the best drink to have at snacks and meals.
- ▶ Juice is not as healthy as it seems. It can have as much sugar as soda.

Our goal is to help children drink fewer sweetened beverages and eat fewer sweets. You can support this goal by reinforcing the key messages at home, and by following these Healthy Habits Power Tips:

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