



# Healthy Living

## Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

**Overview:** Sugar sweetened beverages are full of empty calories, contribute to diseases and tooth decay. They are a major source of sugar for many youth. Visualizing the amount of sugar in drinks can be eye-opening! To translate grams of sugar into teaspoons, divide the grams of sugar in the entire container by 4 (multiply by the number of serving in the container if necessary). Include information from the “Background: Why drink water and milk instead of sweetened drinks” sheet depending on the age of youth and time restraints.

### **Supplies:**

- 20-ounce empty cola bottle
- Sugar\*—at least 1 cup or more
- Measuring teaspoons or plastic disposable spoons
- Clear 8-12-ounce plastic cups
- 1 red, 1 yellow, 1 green sheet of paper or printed circles
- Handouts: Background: Why drink water instead of sweetened drinks? and Read the Label

**Time:** 15-30 minutes

### **Activities:**

1. Discuss with students that some beverages are better for us than others. Beverages help us quench our thirst but some can be a poor choice because of sugar and fat content. We can use a stop light symbol (red, yellow, green) to help us see which beverages are most healthy. *Ask youth which beverages go on each circle before showing them the appropriate circle to place each beverage.*

Green beverages = water, fat-free and low-fat (1%) unflavored milk (low calorie, milk contains vitamins and minerals and protein)

Yellow beverages = flavored, 2%, and whole milk, 100% juice (contains vitamins/minerals, but also higher in calories)

Red beverages = soda, sports drinks, juice drinks, etc. (high in calories, no vitamins/minerals or other nutrients)

2. Say, Let's see how many teaspoons of sugar are in this 20-ounce bottle of cola

- Measure 1 teaspoon of sugar at a time into a clear plastic cup. Ask youth to tell you when to stop measuring. Add sugar until you've reached 16 teaspoons. Make this dramatic and fun like a game show!
- Hold up the bottle of cola and show how much of the bottle is filled with sugar!

\*Can also use salt instead which is less sticky and less likely to be consumed.

- Have youth get into groups of 2-3. Pass out empty Stop beverage containers such as cola, fruit drinks, and other sweetened drinks so each group has a container.
  - Give each group a copy of the “Read the Label” handout. Show them where to find the serving size (1 bottle) and where to find the grams of sugar (under Total Carbohydrates). Make sure all youth are able to identify these items on the handout before moving on.
  - Tell youth that the nutrition label provides us with lots of information including: calories, sugar, and calcium in beverages.
  - Now, have pairs of youth measure sugar for their beverage into a clear cup using plastic spoons or teaspoons.
  - After everyone has measured their sugar, have youth discuss which beverages have the most sugar.
3. Recap the main points of the lesson by asking youth what they learned, if anything surprised them, and if they think they might change the beverages they consume after participating in the lesson.

## Background: Why drink water and milk instead of sweetened drinks?

### Sweetened Drinks are Full of Sugar and Calories, and Low on Nutrients!

Sweetened drinks are easy to consume, high in calories, and contribute to weight gain, chronic disease and tooth decay. They are a major source of sugar for many youth. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines recommend that less than 10% of daily calories be from added sugar (about 12 teaspoons for a 2000 calorie diet). Visualizing the amount of sugar in drinks can be eye-opening. To translate grams of sugar into teaspoons, divide the grams of sugar in the entire container by 4 (and multiply by the number of servings in the container if needed).

### Children Drink More Sweetened Beverages and Less Milk than is Healthy

Because many children drink soda or other sweetened beverages instead of milk, they are not getting the calcium they need for their growing bones; they consume more calories, but fewer nutrients.

### What Counts as a Sweetened Drink?

Sweetened drinks include any drink with added sugar, such as soda, fruit-flavored drinks and fruit juice drinks, iced tea, lemonade, sports drinks, energy drinks, and flavored milk. To identify sweetened drinks, look for sugar in the ingredients list on a beverage label. If you see corn sweetener or syrup, or anything that ends in “-ose” like dextrose or fructose, as one of the first 3 ingredients, that’s probably a sugar-sweetened drink! For a complete list of sugars, see the 2015-2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

### What About 100% Fruit Juice?

Even 100% fruit juice is easy to over-consume, adding excess calories and contributing to weight gain. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting juice to 1 to 1½ cups (8-12 ounces) per day for 7-18 year olds. Whole fruit (fresh, canned, frozen, dried) is a better choice than juice as it contains more fiber, which helps people feel full, and provides more nutrients.

### Drinking Our Calories Doesn’t Make Us Feel Full!

With sweetened drinks, it is easy to drink many calories without realizing it, especially since many sweetened drinks come in large containers. Research suggests that sweetened drinks do not fill us up like solid food does, so we may not reduce the amount of other food we eat to make up for them.

### Water for Good Health

Water is the best choice for quenching thirst and staying hydrated. While bottled water or seltzer is costly, tap water has no calories and is readily available for free!

### Low-Fat or Fat-Free Milk for Good Health

Milk is a good source of calcium, which helps build strong bones. Experts recommend that children aged 9+ consume 3 cups of low-fat (1%) or fat-free milk or dairy a day, and those aged 4-8 consume 2 cups. Soy and other non-dairy milks are healthy choices if they are low-fat, unsweetened and fortified with calcium and vitamin D.

### Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks

Both sports drinks and energy drinks are costly and not necessary. In general, except for serious athletes during intense activity, water is recommended as the best exercise drink, not sports drinks. And energy drinks are high in caffeine and can have harmful side effects especially when consumed by youth or teens.

### What About Diet Drinks?

Drinks with artificial sweeteners add little or no calories to your diet. However, they have few or no nutrients, and may increase desire for sweet tastes. This may cause foods that are less sweet, like fruits and vegetables, to become less appealing. For best health, limit artificially sweetened beverages.

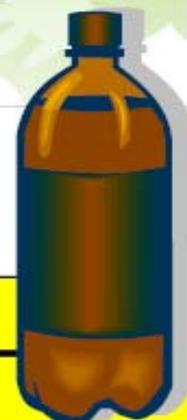
# Read the Label!

## Nutrition Facts

20 oz. cola

Serving Size: 1 bottle (591mL)

Servings Per Container: 1



Amount Per Serving

Calories 240    Calories from Fat 0

**% Daily Value \***

**Total Fat 0g** 0%

Saturated Fat 0g 0%

Trans Fat 0g

**Cholesterol 0mg** 0%

**Sodium 75mg** 3%

**Total Carbohydrate 65g** 22%

Dietary Fiber 0g 0%

Sugars 65g

**Protein 0g**

Vitamin A 0%    Vitamin C 0%

Calcium 0%    Iron 0%

\* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.