

THE INVISIBILITY OF LIQUID CALORIES:

DRINKING OUR WAY INTO OBESITY

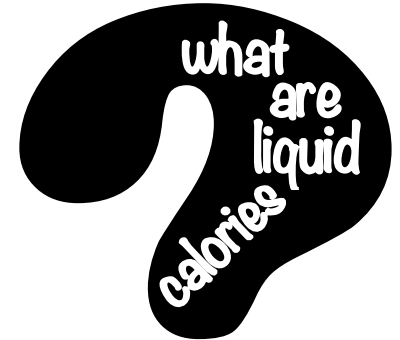
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Whenever you're feeling hungry, what do you reach for when you walk into your kitchen – a drink or a snack? If you answered, “snack” then you, like many Americans, probably associate solid foods with feeling *full*. We don't tend to crave a drink when we are hungry; therefore liquids are usually associated with quenching thirst while solids are associated with satiating hunger.

THEN, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Well, because we psychologically categorize solids and liquids them in terms of hunger and thirsty; we don't tend to include liquids in our calorie intake! The thirstier we are and the sweeter a beverage is, the tastier it is and the more we drink. The more we drink, the more empty calories we consume from liquids alone! Therefore, liquid calories contribute to increasing obesity rates.¹

- ✓ Added sugars are devoid of nutrients other than being sources of energy
- ✓ Artificial sweeteners are not “healthier” alternatives to consuming sugars
- ✓ 67% of 12-to-16-year-olds drink one 12-ounce can of regular carbonated soft drink per day or less



key
terms



CALORIES: units of energy

“empty” calories² provide energy but have zero nutrition for the body
“liquid” calories are high-calorie drinks usually in the form of empty calories

OBESITY: a physical condition in which a person is excessively overweight

SATIETY: the feeling/state/condition of being full or gratified to satisfaction

WHAT IS HAPPENING?

Some Americans drink sugar-sweetened high-calorie juices and soft drinks *in addition* to their meals throughout the day; whereas other Americans drink sugar-sweetened high-calorie diet shakes *instead* of eating their meals. Either way, it is not the actual sugars and calories by themselves that are critically contributing to the obesity epidemic – but our dietary behavior and the way these drinks are used by the consumer.ⁱⁱⁱ

WHO IS THIS HAPPENING TO?

Advertisements target soft drink and juice commercials to children and teens – making them attractive and appealing. Adults, however, drink soda as well, but it is the youth that drinks these high-calorie beverages regularly. The more empty calories they drink, the more likely they gain weight.^{iv} Globally, empirical evidence between countries varies in representing comparable data and results in varying criteria in defining obesity. Therefore, it is difficult to create a standard for measure of comparison.^v

Obesity is a problem because it leads to many health effects like type-2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and increased risk of heart disease or stroke.^{vi}

WHAT CAN WE DO?

There are many potential policies and plans circulating in response to the liquid calorie – obesity epidemic, but no progress in carrying them out due to lack of reliable evidence in proving that correlation equals causation. One such viable policy is to tax sugar-sweetened beverages. However, by taxing (aka raising the price of) sugar-sweetened beverages, the general public will increase the demand for even cheaper alternatives, and because cheaper alternatives are usually synonymous with empty calories, the net effect of solving the obesity crisis will defeat the purpose of adding tax. The crisis is a behavioral pattern couched in the affordability of these beverages with their appealing taste and refreshment—taxing the product will not stop or cease the behavior of consuming it, it will only redirect it.^{vii}

We must educate our youth

and integrate nutrition/health as a core and important subject as a priority in our educational system.



250 empty calories

VS.



250 nutritional calories

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- ⁱ Almiron-Roig, E., Y. Chen, and A. Drewnowski. "Liquid Calories And The Failure Of Satiety: How Good Is The Evidence?." *Obesity Reviews* 4.4 (2003): 201.
- ⁱⁱ Waugh, Rachel. "Soda Sock." *Scholastic Choices*. 24.3 (2008): 6.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Drewnowski, Adam. "Liquid calories, sugar, and body weight1,2,3." *The American journal of clinical nutrition*. 85.3 01 Mar 2007: 651.
- ^{iv} Waugh, Rachel. "Soda Sock." *Scholastic Choices*. 24.3 (2008): 6.
- ^v Wang, Youfa, and Tim Lobstein. "Worldwide Trends In Childhood Overweight And Obesity." *International Journal Of Pediatric Obesity* 1.1 (2006): 11-25.
- ^{vi} Alpert, Patricia T. "Obesity: A Worldwide Epidemic." *Home, Healthcare, Management, & Practice*. 21.1 (2009): 442-444.
- ^{vii} Edwards, Ryan D. "Commentary: Soda taxes, obesity, and the shifty behavior of consumers." *Preventative Medicine*. 52.6 (2011): 417-418.

*** Sources in call-out box:

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2. Holmgren, Brooke. "Soda Goes." *Natural Solutions* 2011: 36-7.
3. Wolson, Shelley. "The King Of The Hill: Challenging Soda." *Foodservice Director* 16.3 (2003): 102.
4. Neuman, Chad. "Diabetes Linked To Soda Consumption." *American Fitness*. 23.5 (2005): 51.
5. Grudnik, Lynn. "Soda consumption linked to pancreatic cancer." *Health Science*. 33.2 (2010): 9.