

# OBESITY FACTS: SUGAR SWEETENED BEVERAGES IN ALASKA

## WHAT ARE SSBs?<sup>1</sup>

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are made with sugar, high fructose corn syrup, honey or other sweeteners that contain calories and include:

**Soft drinks:** Nonalcoholic, flavored, carbonated or non-carbonated beverages usually commercially prepared and sold in bottles or cans

**Soda, pop, soda pop:** Same as soft drink

**Fruit drinks, punches, or ades:** Sweetened beverages that contain diluted fruit juice

**Sports drinks:** Beverages designed to help athletes rehydrate, as well as replenish electrolytes, sugar, and other nutrients

**Tea and coffee drinks:** Teas and coffees to which caloric sweeteners have been added

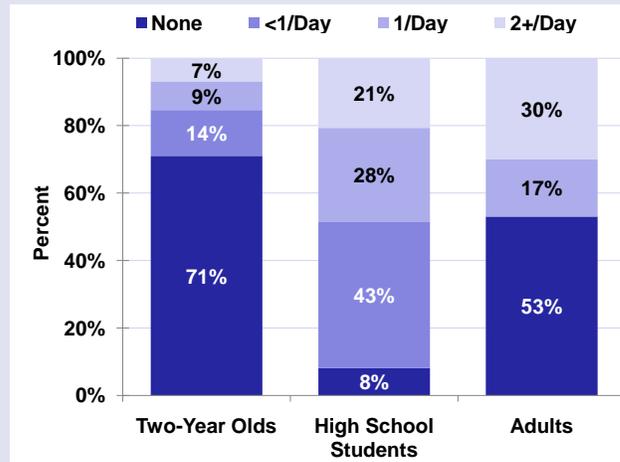
**Energy drinks:** Most energy drinks are carbonated drinks that contain large amounts of caffeine, sugar and other ingredients, such as vitamins, amino acids, and herbal stimulants

**Sweetened milks or milk alternatives:** Beverages prepared by blending sweetened powder or syrup and milk

## WHY ARE SSBs A PROBLEM?

- 2 of every 3 adults and 1 of every 3 children in Alaska are overweight or obese.<sup>2</sup>
- Maintaining a healthy weight requires a balance of calories consumed and energy expended.
- SSBs:
  - provide “empty calories,” with little or no nutritional value
  - are the largest source of added sugar<sup>3</sup> in the U.S. diet, and
  - are an substantial contributor of calories in the U.S. diet.<sup>4</sup>
- High consumption of SSBs is associated with obesity and a number of negative health conditions, including diabetes<sup>1</sup> and cavities.<sup>5</sup>
- Reduction of SSB consumption can lead to weight loss.<sup>6</sup>

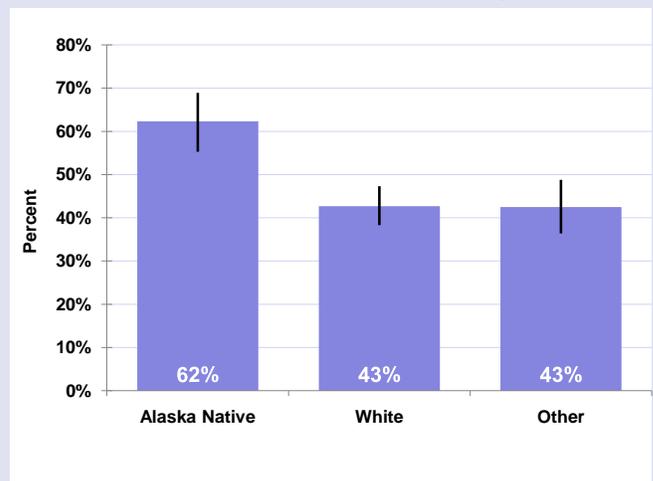
SSB CONSUMPTION: AVERAGE NUMBER OF CANS/GLASSES PER DAY, ALASKA



Sources: Alaska CUBS (2006); Alaska YRBS (2009); Alaska BRFSS (2009; Note: no <1/day response option for adults)

- 16% of two-year olds<sup>7</sup>, 49% of high school students, and 47% of adults in Alaska drink one or more SSBs per day.

PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH CONSUMING 1+ CANS/GLASSES OF SSBs PER DAY BY RACE, ALASKA



Source: Alaska YRBS (2009)

- The majority of Alaska Native high school students drink at least 1 SSB per day.
- Two-year olds in northern and southwestern Alaska are much more likely to consume any amount of SSBs (58%) compared to 2-year olds statewide (29%).<sup>7</sup>

# OBESITY FACTS: STRATEGIES TO REDUCE SSB CONSUMPTION

## What Can Alaska Schools, Worksites & Communities Do?<sup>2,3</sup>

- Ensure ready access to potable drinking water.
  - Limit access to SSBs.
  - Promote access to and consumption of healthy alternatives to SSBs.
  - Limit marketing of SSBs and minimize marketing's impact on children.
  - Decrease the relative cost of healthy beverage alternatives through differential pricing of SSBs.
- See [www.yaleruddcenter.org/sodatax.aspx](http://www.yaleruddcenter.org/sodatax.aspx)

## What Can Health Care Providers Do?

- Include screening and counseling about SSB consumption as part of routine medical and dental care.
- Expand the knowledge and skills of medical and dental care providers to conduct nutrition screening and counseling regarding SSB consumption.

## What Can Individuals Do?

- Drink or serve water, low-fat (1%) milk, or zero-calorie beverages instead of SSBs.
- Always check the Nutrition Facts label and be aware of the calories in one can or bottle of a beverage.
- If opting for a sugar-sweetened beverage, select the smallest size.

66% of Alaska adults support policies that ban soda machines in schools<sup>2</sup>

SSBs are the third largest contributor of calories in children and adolescent diets; providing an average of 118 calories each day.<sup>9</sup>

36% of added sugar in the American diet comes from SSBs.<sup>9</sup>

## References

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<http://www.hss.state.ak.us/dph/chronic/obesity>

