

Study reports nearly 1 in 3 California kids have a sugary drink daily

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In 2009, just 26 percent of children had one more sugary drinks per day; in 2014, that figure had increased to 31 percent. Credit: iStock.com/Sasiistock

Nearly one-third of California children between the ages of 2 and 11 drink one or more sugary drinks per day, according to a [UCLA study](#)

[published today.](#)

That percentage represents an alarming increase since 2009, when just over one-quarter of the state's [children](#) had one or more [sugary drinks](#) per day.

Conducted by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research and funded by The California Endowment, the research analyzed California Health Interview Survey data on [sugary drink consumption](#) among California children from 2003 to 2014. Sugary drinks include soda, sports drinks, energy drinks, and tea and juice drinks with added sugar but do not include diet beverages or 100 percent juice.

"The numbers we observed are especially troubling because they show that the reductions in consumption observed in the past are reversing," said Dr. Susan Babey, lead author of the study and co-director of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research's Chronic Disease Program.

Between 2003 and 2009, the proportion of children consuming at least one sugary drink per day decreased from 49 percent to 26 percent. However, since 2009, the percentage has risen to 31 percent. Research confirms that one sugary drink a day can increase people's risk for Type 2 diabetes, liver disease, dental decay and obesity.

The study's authors join American Medical Association, the American Heart Association and other national [health](#) organizations, in recommending lower consumption of sugary drinks among children as a way to improve [public health](#) and reduce risk for chronic disease.

The researchers found disparities in sugary drink consumption rates from region to region within the state. Nearly 40 percent of young children in San Bernardino County had at least one sugary drink per day, compared to less than 30 percent in the more affluent San Diego County.

"This study shows that children are still drinking too much sugar. In order to keep our kids healthy and our chronic disease rates and costs from skyrocketing, we need to reverse this trend," said Flojaune Cofer, state policy director at Public Health Advocates, a California-based nonprofit dedicated to addressing policy solutions to emerging health issues. "The problem is especially severe among low-income communities, heightening the need for local and state policymakers to redouble efforts to protect these communities."

According to previous research by Babey, one in three young adults in California already have prediabetes, a precursor to life-threatening Type 2 diabetes.

Research suggests sugary drink consumption is influenced by social and environmental factors such as the food environment and aggressive beverage marketing. The increased consumption among California children suggests the need for greater policy and education efforts, Cofer said.

"Our kids don't need to be [drinking](#) anything with added sugar," she said. "That's why continued pressure and advocacy for standard drink options without sugar, along with accurate labeling and advertising, are important for creating a healthy environment for our children. We can work together to ensure our kids can live healthy and vibrant lives."

Robert Ross, president and CEO of The California Endowment, said, "The [consumption](#) of sugar-sweetened beverages poses a serious threat to the health of children. Type 2 diabetes is preventable, so it's important for children to have access to healthy alternatives to junk drinks, like water and flavored, unsweetened sparkling water."

Provided by University of California, Los Angeles

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