



Don't keep sugary beverages at home

I stopped buying soft drinks to have at home because I've read that they are a big reason why so many children are overweight. But my kids said they would stop eating so many snacks if I started buying soda again. Does that sound like an even trade?

Depending on what kind of snacks your children are eating, it might be a good idea to cut them back. But it's always a good idea to restrict sugary drinks. Don't negotiate on that.

Today, more than one-third of U.S. children and adolescents are overweight or obese, and the percentage who are obese tripled between 1980 and 2008.

Of course, there are many reasons for these increases, but sugary drinks have been in the spotlight because they are the primary source of added sugar in children's diets. Each 12-ounce can of sugary soft drinks contains about 10 teaspoons of sugar.

At least one study, published by *The Lancet* in 2001, indicated that for each 12-ounce serving of sugar-sweetened drinks consumed by sixth- and seventh-graders each day, their risk of obesity increased by 60 percent.

One of the problems with sugary drinks is that they provide a lot of calories very quickly: A 20-ounce bottle has 240 calories or more.

But even with that many calories, beverages usually don't help people feel as full as if they had eaten the same number of calories in solid food. As a result, they eat just as much as they would if they hadn't had the soft drink. So, they're just consuming additional calories — calories that don't provide a nutritional boost.

Sugary drinks aren't just carbonated beverages. Calorie-laden "fruitades," such as lemonade or Gatorade, also qualify as sugary drinks, as do energy drinks and fruit drinks that aren't 100 percent juice.

Your children will likely not stop drinking sugary beverages altogether. Schools have been cutting back, but obviously, they're still widely available. Still, you don't have to buy them and have them at home. Instead, encourage your kids to drink water or low-fat milk. A moderate amount of 100 percent juice is OK, too.

For more information about sugary drinks and obesity for children and adults, see the Harvard School of Public Health's fact sheet at <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/sugary-drinks-fact-sheet/>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University's College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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