

**M**ore and more school-aged children and teenagers today have come to consider drinking soda and other sugar-filled beverages to be a regular part of their daily routine, including at mealtime. As a result, the dental community is seeing more evidence of tooth decay in young people. Furthermore, these drinks provide large amounts of calories to children, who already do not meet national dietary goals and are experiencing obesity in epidemic proportions.

**Canning Tooth Decay** is a program sponsored by the Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) to educate students, teachers, and parents on the effects that too much soda can have on oral health.

According to the *Journal of Pediatrics*, the average American child consumes approximately two 12-ounce cans of soft drinks per day. This amounts to 20 teaspoons of sugar each day—nearly twice the recommended limit children should have. Not only does drinking all this soda contribute to the ever-growing obesity problem in children in the United States, but it can also play a major role in dental decay.

Even with regular brushing and flossing, both diet and regular sodas can break down the enamel of teeth. Tiny bacteria live between and around teeth and, when exposed to the sugar in soft drinks, produce an acid that causes damage to the enamel of teeth that eventually leads to decay and cavities. This acid can begin to harm tooth enamel in only 20 minutes.

### Not Hip To Sip

It's not only soft drinks that are contributing to an increase in tooth decay. Nationwide, students are drinking more sports drinks and fruit juices, which also contain high concentrations of sugar. In 2004, 57 percent of school beverage sales in Massachusetts were from sugared sodas, sports drinks, and fruit juices.

The problem isn't just with the drinks themselves, but also with the frequency that a child's teeth are exposed to sugar throughout the school day. Children and teens who consume sugar-rich beverages at school have a tendency to nurse several drinks during the day, which significantly contributes to the development of tooth decay. For example, if a student takes one small sip of soda, and then a minute later, takes another small sip, and then another sip—and this goes on during the course of one day—teeth are exposed over and over again to high concentrations of sugar and acid without any kind of break.

Even sugar-free soda is harmful to teeth because it contains high amounts of acid-causing decay. Because students typically do not brush their teeth during school hours, their risk of getting cavities increases dramatically.

### Some Hard Truths about Soft Drinks and Tooth Decay:




- On average, one 12-ounce can of regular soda contains 10 teaspoons of sugar, and one 20-ounce bottle contains 16 teaspoons of sugar.
- Drinking soda three or more times a day increases the risk of dental cavities by 179 percent.
- Repeatedly exposing dental enamel to carbonated beverages, weakens and may permanently destroy enamel.
- Children between the ages of 8 and 17 are at the greatest risk for tooth decay from consuming acidic, sugar-rich soft drinks because the enamel protecting their teeth has not fully developed.



One 12 oz can of soda = 10 teaspoons of sugar

### Are Sodas and Sports Drinks Big Zeroes?

In addition to their high content of sugar, many drinks found in school vending machines do not contain any vitamins or nutrients compared with milk.

<b>Nutrition Facts</b>			
Serving Size 1 Containter			
	 Soda (12 oz.)	 Sports Drink (8 oz.)	 Low-Fat Milk (12 oz.)
<b>Amount Per Serving</b>			
<b>Calories</b>	150	50	120
<b>% Daily Value*</b>			
<b>Total Fat</b>	0%	0%	4.5%
<b>Total Carb</b>	14%	8%	4%
<b>Protein</b>	0g	0g	8g
Vitamin A	0%	0%	10%
Vitamin C	0%	0%	4%
Vitamin D	0%	0%	25%
<b>Calcium</b>	0%	0%	30%

\*Percent Daily Values (DV) are based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

### Time to "Pop" Some Questions Did you know...

- Every day, adolescents receive approximately 11 percent of their calories, or 15 teaspoons of sugar, from soft drinks?
- Today, kids drink twice as much soda as milk? As a result, milk consumption in school has declined 40 percent?
- Nearly 40 percent of preschool children drink nearly 9 ounces of soda each day?

# Five Reasons to Drink Water

**Water helps you get well.** When you're sick, the old saying, "drink plenty of liquids" holds true. Water helps control fevers and replace lost fluids.

**Water regulates your body temperature.** Perspiration is your body's natural mechanism to control body temperature. As a result, in order to sweat, you need plenty of water.

**Water helps you lose weight.** Increasing your water intake can help you control your weight by preventing you from confusing hunger with thirst.

**Water helps you while you exercise.** Drinking water before, during, and after exercise will help reduce muscle cramping and fatigue. Water also keeps your metabolism working to give you the energy and hydration necessary during exercise. Some bottled water even contains fluoride, which helps reduce dental decay in children by up to 60 percent.

**Water helps you stay hydrated, alert, and energized.** On average, most people lose nearly 10 cups of fluid a day. Even minor dehydration can cause a loss of concentration, headaches, fatigue, and irritability.

**By providing students with more nutritional options, parents and school officials will not only be *Canning Tooth Decay*, but also encouraging them to make choices that are just as easy to swallow.**



1. Decrease the availability of soft drinks and other sugary beverages in schools or eliminate soda vending machines completely.
2. Increase the number of vending machines that contain healthy drinks, such as water and low-fat or fat-free milk.
3. Avoid contracts that include incentives based on income generated from the sale of soft drinks sold in vending machines.
4. Parents should be encouraged to purchase healthy beverages for their families.

## What Can School Officials, Lawmakers, and Parents Do to "Can" Decay?

# Canning Tooth Decay



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