More and more children and teenagers today have made drinking soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages a 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.

The American Heart Association recommends that kids ages 2 to 18 should have less than 25 grams, or 6 teaspoons, of added sugars daily. That’s nearly impossible to achieve for soda drinkers, considering one 12-ounce can of regular soda contains 10 teaspoons of sugar—about 65% more added sugars than the recommended daily limit. Supersizing your beverage to a 20-ounce bottle of “pop” contains 16 teaspoons of the sweet stuff—230% more added sugars than the recommended daily limit!

Not only does drinking sugar-sweetened beverages 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 regular and diet 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 tooth enamel, which eventually leads to decay and cavities. And it doesn’t take long—this acid can begin to wreak havoc in only 20 minutes!

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### Are Sodas and Sports Drinks Big Zeros?

In addition to their high sugar content, soda and sports drinks do not contain any vitamins or nutrients, where milk does.

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### Nutrition Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serving Size</th>
<th>Soda (12 oz.)</th>
<th>Sports Drink (8 oz.)</th>
<th>Low-Fat Milk (12 oz.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Calories</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Daily Value*</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Fat</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Carb</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protein</td>
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<td>8g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin A</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin C</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vitamin D</td>
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<td>0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Calcium</td>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

### Sugar Content in Beverages

- Brown sugar
- Cane crystals/sugar
- Corn sweetener
- Dextrin
- Evaporated cane juice
- Fruit juice concentrate
- High fructose corn syrup
- Honey
- Malt syrup
- Maple syrup
- Molasses
- And most ingredients ending with the letters “ose” (e.g., fructose, lactose, sucrose, maltose, dextrose)
The Benefits

- Reduces muscle cramping and fatigue when consumed before, during, and after exercise.
- Regulates body temperature. To sweat, you need plenty of water.
- Helps you get well when you’re sick by controlling fever and replacing lost fluid.
- Keeps you hydrated, alert, and energized. Even minor dehydration can cause a loss of concentration, fatigue, and irritability.
- Prevents you from confusing hunger with thirst, which can help you control your weight.