$500 MILLION is spent annually marketing carbonated drinks to children.

This brief describes the link between sugar-loaded beverages (SLBs) — which include sodas, sports drinks, and other beverages that contain added caloric sweeteners — and obesity in San Mateo County. Get Healthy San Mateo County (GHSMC) seeks to discourage sugar-loaded beverage consumption to prevent overweight and obesity in our county.

THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF ADDED SUGAR IN OUR DIET

The National Health and Nutritional Survey estimates that more than one-third of all sugars consumed are from SLBs. San Mateo County residents are no exception to this: 33% of children in San Mateo County ages 2–11 drink one or more sodas every day; 50% of youth ages 12–17 drink one or more sodas every day; and 14% of adults drink one or more sodas every day.

A LEADING CONTRIBUTOR TO OBESITY

SLBs contribute significantly to overweight, obesity and related diseases. Recent research reveals that SLBS are one of the leading contributors to increasing waistlines. Our bodies don’t compensate for liquid calories in the same way as calories from solid food. A report released in 2009 by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research found that people who drink one or more sodas a day are 27% more likely to be overweight or obese, regardless of race/ethnicity and income.

THE COST OF OBESITY AND RELATED DISEASES

In San Mateo County, 25% of children and more than 50% of adults are overweight or obese. These averages have been increasing over the past twenty years, and poorer communities and communities of color have been disproportionately affected. Overweight and obesity often lead to chronic disease, such as Type 2 diabetes. One in three children born in 2000 is expected to develop Type 2 diabetes in his or her lifetime. Obesity and obesity-related diseases contribute to absenteeism from school and poor academic performance, and lead to an array of other health problems. In addition to decreased productivity and quality of life, obesity and related diseases are estimated to cost San Mateo County approximately $574,000,000 annually.
TAKE ACTION SAN MATEO COUNTY

It is predicted that this is the first generation of children who will live fewer years and have a lower quality of life than their parents. You can reduce consumption of sodas in your community through simple actions.

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<tr>
<th>What Can Be Done</th>
<th>Who?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eliminate Sugar-Loaded Beverages (SLBs) at your organization’s events</td>
<td>EVERYONE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have drinking water available at your organizations, schools, facilities, afterschool programs, childcare centers and preschools</td>
<td>EVERYONE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote campaigns like Rethink Your Drink and Soda-Free Summer</td>
<td>EVERYONE</td>
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<td>Implement a tax on SLBs; funds raised could support nutrition and physical activity efforts</td>
<td>Cities, Counties</td>
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<td>Implement a City or County resolution encouraging retailers to remove SLBs from checkout lanes</td>
<td>Cities, Counties</td>
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<tr>
<td>Implement healthy food vending policies to limit the number of SLB retailers near schools and playgrounds</td>
<td>Cities, Counties, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs), School Boards</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Get Healthy San Mateo County (GHSMC) is a countywide collaborative of community-based organizations, leaders, schools, afterschool programs, childcare centers, healthcare providers, cities and County staff. Our mission is to prevent childhood obesity by increasing access to healthy food and physical activity. GHSMC identifies the most prominent issues in battling the onset of overweight and obesity and implements solutions.

1 For children and adolescents (ages 2–19 years), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines overweight as a BMI at or above the 85th percentile and lower than the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex, and obesity as a BMI at or above the 95th percentile for children of the same age and sex.


For assistance with taking action in your community, or if you have questions or comments, please contact the Health Policy & Planning division of the San Mateo County Health System at (650)573-2398 or hpp@co.sanmateo.ca.us.