

The webinar ***Sugar-Sweetened Beverages - Strategies to Reduce Consumption: What Comprehensive Cancer Control Coalitions Need to Know*** was aired on August 28, 2019, and explored how sugary drinks, cancer prevention, and health systems are connected.

This document summarizes key takeaways and resources from the webinar at the following link: <https://youtu.be/lpbYVc5HuS8>.

The *American Cancer Society Comprehensive Cancer Control (ACS CCC)* team hosted the webinar. The ACS CCC team seeks to build the capacity of grant recipients in the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention National Comprehensive Cancer Control Program* to implement policy, systems, and environmental change approaches and evidence-based promising practices in cancer prevention, screening, diagnostic follow-up, and survivorship.

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Overweight and obesity are major risk factors for cancer. Nearly 20% of all cancer cases in the U.S. can be attributed to excess body weight, poor nutrition, lack of physical activity, and alcohol consumption. While there is no evidence that **sugary drinks** have a direct impact on cancer risk, they have been shown to **contribute to weight gain** that impacts cancer risk.

- Sugary drinks are a leading source of added sugar in our diets.
- Sugary drinks provide no nutritional value and do not increase satiety.
- Sugary drinks lead to excess calorie intake and weight gain.
- Some obesity-related cancers are on the rise in younger age groups.
- Recommendations state that added sugars should be less than 10% of total daily calories.

Policy Recommendations

The *American Heart Association* and the *American Academy of Pediatrics* called for six policy changes to protect children and adolescents:

- Raise the price of sugary drinks, including through the use of excise taxes.
- Curb the marketing of sugary drinks to children and adolescents.
- Federal nutrition assistance programs (SNAP, WIC, etc.) should ensure access to healthy foods and beverages and discourage sugary drink consumption.
- Consumers should have access to credible nutrition information on nutrition labels, restaurant menus, and advertisements.
- Adopt policies that make healthy beverages the default for city, state, and federal food service guidelines, for beverages in kids' meals, etc.
- Hospitals should serve as a model and implement policies to limit or disincentivize choices of sugary drinks.

Health Systems

Health systems can raise awareness of the connection between sugary beverages and adverse health effects and motivate employers and other entities to make changes in their workplaces. Some hospitals have encouraged healthier choices by eliminating or reducing the availability of sugary drinks and have improved food and beverage environments, including:

Healthier Hospital Environments

- Get rid of fryers.
 - Increase the use of locally sourced foods.
 - Reduce prices on healthier foods.
 - Reduce portion sizes.
 - Label food choices to make the healthiest options clear.
 - Encourage movement and exercise.
- Consumer Satisfaction. Hospitals want employees, patients, and visitors to be happy with the cafeteria and vending machine choices.
 - Personal Choice. Hospitals want consumers to have personal choice.
 - Market Leaders. Some hospitals will wait until other systems lead the way.

Motivations for Change

- Walk the walk in upholding healthy behaviors.
- Focus on employee wellness.
- Ask executives to lead the change.
- Use nutrition, wellness, and food service champions.
- Use assessment tools to indicate negative outcomes.

Barriers to Policy Adoption

- Revenue. Hospitals are concerned about lost revenues from sugary beverage sales.

Tools for Hospital Systems

- Environmental scans that demonstrate the need for changes
- Champion at a high level to lead change
- Literature and evidence to make a case for change
- Case study of hospital system successes
- Clear, strong messages to vendors
- Good communication when rolling out new policies
- Preparation for managing negative reactions

Case Study: Working with the Minnesota CCC Coalition to Change the Conversation about Sugary Drinks

Minnesota's Comprehensive Cancer Control partners collaborated to support and encourage hospitals to create healthier food environments and reduce the availability of sugary drinks. The 2011-2016 *Cancer Plan Minnesota* had the goal of reducing obesity and a key strategy of reducing sugary beverage consumption. As a result, the program granted funds to the *Public Health Law Center* to lead and support the work with hospitals to reduce sugary drink consumption.

Minnesota had prior successes working with hospitals on smoke-free policies. These types of behavioral changes are complex, and many forces resist change. Project leaders thought that hospitals could have unique roles as champions and role models to create healthier food environments. The timing for this project was aligned with several other projects:

- The Minnesota-based *Commons Health Hospital Challenge* was a pledge to phase out all sugary drink sales within one year.
- The *Healthy Hospital Food Initiative* – 80% healthy beverage supply; promote tap water
- The *Health Care Without Harm Healthy Beverage Initiative* – Ensure that at least 80% of beverages purchased for use throughout hospitals are healthy.
- *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* published on the issue.

With permission from the Boston Public Health Commission, the Public Health Law Center created a collection of resources based on their *Healthy Beverages and Healthcare Guide* (see the link in the Resources section).

The toolkit was a cornerstone of the overall project and provided a way to start the conversation and support for those who were interested in making changes. CCC partners made presentations around the state to raise awareness about sugary drinks and opportunities for change.

"By phasing out the sale of soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages, the health care facilities in Northeastern Minnesota are saying that they prioritize good health before, as well as after, people are sick. They are offering inspiring leadership to other hospitals and health care systems, their patients, staff, and the entire community."

Edward P. Ehlinger, MD, MsPH, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Health (July 2013 editorial published in the Duluth News Tribune).

What Coalitions Can Do

- Identify and connect partners on issues.
- Bring resources to enhance the work.
- Serve as messengers on sensitive topics.
- Change the conversation.

Online Resources

- Public Policies to Reduce Sugary Drink Consumption in Children and Adolescents
<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/143/4/e20190282>
- Public Health Law Center
<https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org>
- Hospitals across the U.S. join the exodus from sugary pop
<http://www.startribune.com/hospitals-across-the-u-s-join-exodus-from-sugary-pop/290278251/>
- ReThink Your Drink <https://rethinkyourdrink.minneapolis.gov/about-rethink-your-drink/>
- Healthy Beverages in Healthcare Toolkit Collection
<https://www.publichealthlawcenter.org/sites/default/files/resources/Healthy-Beverages-in-Healthcare-Toolkit-Collection-2014.pdf>