Much like the obesity epidemic, consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) by both children and adults has increased over the past 30 years in the United States (U.S.).\textsuperscript{1-3} During 2005-2008, approximately one-half of the U.S. population reported consuming SSBs on any given day.\textsuperscript{1} Overall, U.S. males consumed an average of 175 calories per day from these sugar drinks, while U.S. females consumed 94 calories.\textsuperscript{1} According to the Los Angeles County Health Survey (LACHS, 2007), more than 43\% of children ages 17 years or younger consume at least one SSB on an average day.\textsuperscript{4} Similarly, among adults in the county, more than 38\% consume at least one SSB a day (Table 1). The American Heart Association currently recommends a consumption goal of no more than 450 calories from sugary drinks per week — this is fewer than three 12-oz. cans of carbonated soda.\textsuperscript{5}

**Prevalence of Child and Adult Obesity in Los Angeles County**

In Los Angeles County, the prevalence of obesity among 5th, 7th, and 9th graders has increased from 19\% in 1999 to 23\% in 2007.\textsuperscript{6} Similarly, the prevalence of obesity among adults has increased by nearly 8\% during the past ten years, from 14\% in 1997 to 22\% in 2007.\textsuperscript{4} Emerging evidence suggests that high consumption of SSBs may be linked to obesity and related chronic conditions, including heart disease, stroke, hypertension, some forms of cancer, and type 2 diabetes.\textsuperscript{7,8}

**High Consumption of SSBs is Particularly Common Among At-Risk Groups in the County**

- More than one-third of high school students drink at least 4 sodas per week.\textsuperscript{9}
- Adult males are nearly twice as likely to consume at least one SSB a day, as compared to females (50\% vs. 28\%; Table 1).\textsuperscript{4}
- Obese adults are more likely to consume SSBs at least once a day than normal (non-obese) adults (50\% vs. 33\%).\textsuperscript{4}
- Compared to other racial/ethnic groups, more than 50\% of Latinos and nearly one-half African-Americans reported drinking one or more SSBs on an average day.\textsuperscript{4}
- More than 75\% of adults support putting restrictions on advertising to children about sugary drinks, cereals, candy, and fast food.\textsuperscript{4}

### Table 1. Percent of adults (18+ years old) who, on average, drink at least one soda or sweetened drink per day, Los Angeles County Health Survey, 2007.\textsuperscript{4}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Drink 1+ Soda(s) a Day</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
<th>Estimated #</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LA County</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>1,811,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28.3</td>
<td>1,078,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-24</td>
<td>70.8</td>
<td>547,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-29</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>345,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>722,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>641,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>322,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-64</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>116,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>197,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>51.2</td>
<td>1,611,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>704,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>309,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>235,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school</td>
<td>53.5</td>
<td>850,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>42.1</td>
<td>547,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college or trade school</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>734,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College or post-graduate</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>736,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Poverty Level (FPL)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-99% FPL</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>905,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-199% FPL</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>736,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-299% FPL</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>435,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300% or above FPL</td>
<td>27.1</td>
<td>812,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight Status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underweight/Normal</td>
<td>32.6</td>
<td>880,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>925,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>723,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2007 Los Angeles County Health Survey; Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. *Note: Estimates are based on self-reported data by a random sub-sample of 1,040 Los Angeles County adults. Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is based on U.S. Census 2006 thresholds.*
What your organization can do

- Serve drinks with no more than 25 calories per 8-oz. serving (water, diet sodas, coffee, and unsweetened tea) at office functions, including meetings, conferences and parties.
- Fill on-site vending machines with beverages that have no more than 25 calories per 8-oz. serving or allow only the bottom two slots for higher-calorie drinks.
- Reduce availability of SSBs in cafeterias and snack shops. Replace them with water or low-calorie/sugar-free beverages (no more than 25 calories per 8-oz. serving).
- Consider selling water and low-calorie beverages at a lower price (if feasible) than sugary drinks.
- Encourage water consumption in the office.

In Los Angeles County:

- More than 14,000 hospitalizations in 2009 were due to coronary heart disease; 16,230 were due to diabetes and 17,463 were due to stroke.
- Treatment costs for diabetes are estimated at $6.4 billion per year.
- Health care costs and lost productivity associated with overweight and obesity totaled $3.5 billion and $2.3 billion, respectively, in 2006.

What individuals can do

- Choose water or low-calorie drinks instead of sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Carry a water bottle and refill it throughout the day.
- Avoid filling the refrigerator with sugar-sweetened beverages.
- Make water more enticing by adding slices of lemon, lime, cucumber, strawberries, or watermelon.
- Drink sparkling water or add a splash of 100% juice to it for some extra flavor.
- Serve water, unsweetened coffee or tea, or low-fat or non-fat milk with meals.
- When choosing a sugar-sweetened beverage, get the smaller size to minimize your intake. Some companies are now selling 8-oz. cans and bottles of soda, which contain about 100 calories.
- Be a role model for your children, family, and friends by choosing healthy drinks.

References

[4] Los Angeles County Dept. of Public Health, Office of Health Assessment and Epidemiology. Los Angeles County Health Survey, 1997-2007. *Note: 1997 obesity estimate may differ from previously reported, as the 1997 indicator has been updated to be comparable to subsequent surveys.

Suggested citation: Research & Evaluation, Division of Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. Consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages in Los Angeles County. September 2011.

For additional information about sugar-sweetened beverages, visit: www.choosehealthla.com/eat-healthy/sugar-loaded-beverages

Partial support was provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Cooperative Agreement No. 1U58DP002485-01.

Editorial review and technical assistance was provided by the Office of Senior Health, Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.