



News from the Office of
ERIE COUNTY EXECUTIVE MARK POLONCARZ

NEWS RELEASE

Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein

April 10, 2013

CONTACT: JoAnne Paxon/ JoAnne.Paxon@erie.gov
Phone: (716)858-4941/ Mobile: (716) 364-3028

Sugary Drinks Are Largest Source of Added Sugar in Our Diet!

Unhealthy Food and Beverage Choices are Associated with a Greater Risk for Obesity

ERIE COUNTY, NY— The Erie County Department of Health (“ECDOH”) is taking this opportunity to provide information regarding sugary drinks or sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). “SSB’s are the single largest source of added sugar in the diets of children in the United States” **said Erie County Health Commissioner Dr. Gale Burstein**. “In children and adolescents, consumption of SSBs is associated with weight gain and diabetes. The key is providing access to healthy choices”.

Food and beverages available in childcare and schools influence children’s food choices. There is broad public support for schools, licensed childcare centers and afterschool programs to establish policies and practices that prohibit the sale and availability of sugar-sweetened beverages. Consider these facts:

- In New York State (NYS), 31% of all children between 2 and 17 years of age consume at least one SSB daily, including one in four children between the ages of 2 and 5 years.
- Kids’ meals in fast food restaurants represent a common source of SSBs for children and adolescents. In NYS, nearly 40% of adults with children in the household report consuming fast food at least once a week
- A recent public opinion poll in NYS found strong support for requiring restaurants to only offer healthier beverage choices such as water, milk or 100% fruit juice with kids’ meals.

- Most adults in NYS recognize that regular consumption of soda (87%) and fruit-flavored drinks (68%) is harmful for children aged 2 to 12 years old. However, only 41% of adults consider regular consumption of sports drinks to be harmful for children

Although sports drink manufacturers market their products as a healthy alternative to soda for children, they contain 5-8 teaspoons of sugar per 12-ounce serving and 50-90% of the calories found in the same serving size of soda. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, water is the best drink choice for most children playing sports or engaged in active play.

Responding to an ever-increasing demand for the nutritional information about the food we eat, the Erie County Department of Health (ECDOH) and the Western New York (WNY) Chapter of the New York State Restaurant Association (NYSRA) have joined together to launch a program **Healthy Choices**, to provide local restaurant owners with the ability to determine the nutritional values of menu items. Restaurateurs will now be able to determine the exact nutritional value and caloric count of any menu item that they serve.

For more information on the **Healthy Choices** Program, visit:

<http://www2.erie.gov/health/index.php?q=healthy-choices>

Additional Resources:

American Academy of Pediatrics: *Clinical Report—Sports Drinks and Energy Drinks for Children and Adolescents: Are They Appropriate?*

<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2011/05/25/peds.2011-0965>

New York State Department of Health

http://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/obesity/sugared_beverages/media/2010-05-24_american_heart_association_study.htm