



## Sugar Sweetened Beverages Facts Sheet

### What is a SSB?

Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSB) are those that contain caloric sweeteners and include soft drinks (soda or pop), fruit drinks, sports drinks, tea and coffee drinks, energy drinks, sweetened milk or milk alternatives, and any other beverages to which sugar, typically high fructose corn syrup or sucrose (table sugar), has been added.

- Generally, consuming food and drinks with natural sugars, which are naturally occurring and provide vitamins and minerals the body needs, is a healthier choice. SSBs contain added sugar, which are not naturally occurring and are high in sugar and low in vitamins and minerals.
- Sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) are the largest source of added sugar and an important contributor of calories in the U.S. diet.<sup>i</sup>
- A single, 20-ounce bottle of regular soda contains 17 teaspoons of sugar.

### Consumption

- On a typical day, 80% of youth and 63% of adults consume SSBs in the United States.<sup>i</sup>
- The average person eats almost 100 pounds of sugar a year—that's more than half a cup of sugar and 420 extra calories each day! The single biggest source is sugary sodas.
- In the last 45 years the per capita consumption of SSBs has increased for youth by 174 kcal/day (8.5% more) and by 153 kcal/day (6.5% more) for adults.<sup>i</sup>
- Teens consume twice as much soda as milk<sup>ii</sup>, though soda has no nutritional value.

### Who is affected?

- The highest consumers of SSBs in the U.S. are adolescents aged 12 to 19 years (13% total calories), particularly males, non-Hispanic blacks and Mexican-Americans, those who are low-income, or obese.<sup>i</sup>
- In 2009, 52% of adults in Boston were considered overweight or obese.<sup>iii</sup>
- About half of Boston high school students are either overweight or at-risk of being overweight.<sup>iv</sup>
- In 2008, 32% of Black adults were obese and 30% of Latinos, compared to 17% of Whites in Boston.<sup>v</sup>

### Health Effects

- The calories from drinking one 12-ounce can of sugar sweetened beverage per day (150 kcal) can result in gaining 15 extra pounds per year<sup>vi</sup>, or 25 extra pounds for a 20-ounce bottle of soda.<sup>ii</sup>
- SSB consumption is associated with obesity, diabetes, elevated triglycerides, cardiovascular disease, non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, gout, and dental caries
- A decrease of 1 serving/day (12 ounces) is associated with a minor weight loss of 1.0 lbs at 6 months and 1.4 lbs at 18 months among adults.<sup>i</sup>
- An average adult would have to walk 25 minutes at a moderate pace to burn off the calories in a 12 ounce soda.
- A 75 pound child would need to bicycle vigorously for 30 minutes to burn off the calories in a 12 ounce soda.<sup>vii</sup>

<sup>i</sup> The CDC Guide to Strategies for Reducing the Consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

<sup>ii</sup> Alameda County Public Health Department, Soda Free Summer 2010

<sup>iii</sup> Boston Public Health Commission, 2009 Health of Boston Report

<sup>iv</sup> Harvard University's 2004 Boston Youth Survey

<sup>v</sup> Boston Behavioral Risk Factor Survey 2008, Boston Public Health Commission

<sup>vi</sup> Steven Gortmaker, Ph.D., Harvard Prevention Research Center/ Harvard School of Public Health

<sup>vii</sup> Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity

Physical activity for healthy weight, Centers for Disease Control 2009

