

Report: Sports, Energy Drinks Coincide with Teen Smoking

PHILADELPHIA (Newswise) — Weekly consumption of sports drinks and energy drinks among adolescents is significantly associated with higher consumption of other sugar-sweetened beverages, cigarette smoking, and screen media use, according to a study conducted by researchers from the University of Minnesota and Duke University.

The study was undertaken to build understanding of health behavior patterns related to adolescent consumption of sports and energy drinks and inform intervention strategies to reduce consumption of these sugar-sweetened beverages. Although national data have shown a decline in the prevalence of soft drink and fruit drink consumption, sports and energy drink consumption has tripled among adolescents in recent years. The high caffeine content of energy drinks, as well as the high sugar and calorie content of many sports and energy drinks, has drawn much concern from health professionals.

Data for the study were gathered from 20 public middle schools and high schools in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area of Minnesota as part of the population-based study, Eating and Activity in Teens (EAT 2010). Surveys and anthropometric measures were completed by 2,793 adolescents during the 2009–2010 school year. Mean age of the participants was 14.4 years, participants were equally divided by gender, and 81 percent identified as a racial/ethnic background other than non-Hispanic white.

Among the measured variables in this study were height and weight; consumption frequency for sports drinks, energy drinks, and breakfast; time spent engaged in physical activity, playing video games, and watching television; and smoking status. Although sports drink consumption was linked to higher levels of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and sport participation, the overall pattern of associations indicated that sports and energy drink consumption should be addressed as part of a clustering of unhealthy behaviors among some adolescents.

Of note, “among boys, weekly sports drink consumption was significantly associated with higher TV viewing; boys who regularly consumed sports drinks spent about one additional hour per week watching TV compared with boys who consumed sports drinks less than once per week,” said lead author Nicole Larson, PhD, MPH, RDN, Division of Epidemiology and Community Health, School of Public Health, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis. As another example, “boys who consumed energy drinks at least weekly spent approximately four additional hours per week playing video games compared to those who consumed energy drinks less than once per week.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that sports drinks should be consumed by adolescents only after vigorous, prolonged activity, and that energy

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Published on Food Manufacturing (<http://www.foodmanufacturing.com>)

drinks should not be consumed because they offer no benefit and increase risks for overstimulation of the nervous system. Future research and interventions should target the clustering of related health risk behaviors and pursue more education to promote healthy hydration habits among youth.

Source URL (retrieved on 04/21/2015 - 1:29am):

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