

Sweet Truth: Know the Truth About Added Sugars

What are Added Sugars?

- Added sugars include sugars that are added to foods and beverages when they are processed. They include foods packaged as sweeteners (table sugar), syrups and honey, and sugars from concentrated fruit or vegetable juices. They do not include naturally occurring sugars that are found in milk, fruits, and vegetables.¹
- The Daily Value for added sugars established by the Food and Drug Administration is 50 grams per day based on a 2,000-calorie daily diet.²
- Americans get most of our added sugars from sugary drinks (drinks sweetened with added sugars, like soda, sports drinks, energy drinks, flavored milk, sweetened coffee, and juice drinks), along with along with desserts and sweet snacks.³

Fast Food Chains Sell Excessive Added Sugars in NYC Communities

- Fast-food restaurants in New York City are concentrated in Black and Latino communities.^{4,5}
- A standard 20oz. Coca-Cola has 65g of sugar,⁶ which is equivalent to drinking 16 teaspoons of sugar in one beverage.
- Most soda fountain drinks served by fast-food restaurant chains contain more than a day's worth of added sugars: even most "small" drinks contain at least a full day's worth (50 grams), most "medium" or "regular" drinks contain at least 1 ½ days' worth, and most "large" contain 2 days' worth.⁷

Added Sugars & Our Health

- Sugary drinks contribute to type 2 diabetes and heart disease⁸—in part by leading to weight gain⁹—and are linked to a higher risk of dental cavities.¹⁰
- Consuming one or more 12-oz can of soda per day significantly increases the risk of dying from heart disease.¹¹
- Healthy eating patterns that are low in added sugars are associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, certain types of cancers.¹²

Diabetes Rates in New York City

- In 2019 the overall prevalence of diagnosed diabetes was 12.4%, with prevalence rates highest in the Bronx (16%), followed by Brooklyn (12%), Manhattan (10%), Queens (13%), and Staten Island (12%).¹³
- A 2013 report by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene revealed that diabetes-related mortality varied across the city, with a nine-fold difference in age-adjusted death rates between the lowest community district (Murray Hill, Manhattan), and the highest (Brownsville, Brooklyn).¹⁴
- The report also found that of the 10 community districts with the highest rates of diabetes-related deaths, four were in Brooklyn, five were in the Bronx, and one was in Manhattan.¹⁵

Chronic Disease & COVID-19

- Having type 2 diabetes, heart disease, or high blood pressure (hypertension) can make it more likely a person will get severely ill from COVID-19.¹⁶
- New York City experienced a 356% increase in diabetes-related deaths during the first wave of COVID-19, the largest increase in any urban area in the nation.¹⁷

Warning Icons are An Effective Tool to Reduce Added Sugars Consumption

- Research from randomized controlled trials has shown that warnings on sugary drinks can significantly reduce sugary drink purchases.¹⁸
- Sugary drink consumption dropped by nearly 25 percent in the 18 months after the country of Chile adopted “high in sugar” nutrient warnings on food and drink packaging nationwide.¹⁹

New Yorkers Support Added Sugar Warnings on Chain Restaurant Menus

- More than one in every six New York City resident supports requiring warning icons on food and drink items with more than a day’s worth of added sugars.²⁰

Bill 1326, which we call the “Sweet Truth Act,” sponsored by New York City Councilmember Mark Levine, would require warning icons on chain restaurant menus for items that exceed 50 grams of added sugars, or an entire day’s worth.



Tell your Elected Officials to require Added Sugars Warning Icons at Chain Restaurants in your Community Today



#SweetTruth <https://cspinet.org/sweettruth>

For more information, please contact the Center for Science in the Public Interest at policy@cspinet.org.

¹ Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. (2020, March). Added sugars on the new nutrition facts label. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://www.fda.gov/food/new-nutrition-facts-label/added-sugars-new-nutrition-facts-label>.

² Ibid., 1.

³ U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov).

⁴ Kwate, N. O., Yau, C. Y., Loh, J. M., & Williams, D. (2009). Inequality in obesogenic environments: fast food density in New York City. *Health & place*, 15(1), 364–373.

⁵ Galvez MP, Morland K, Raines C, Kobil J, Siskind J, Godbold J, Brenner B. Race and food store availability in an inner-city neighbourhood. *Public Health Nutr.* 2008 Jun;11(6):624-31. doi: 10.1017/S1368980007001097. Epub 2007 Oct 15. PMID: 17935646.

⁶ The Coca-Cola Company. (n.d.). How much sugar is in Coca-Cola? The Coca-Cola Company. <https://www.coca-colacompany.com/faqs/how-much-sugar-is-in-coca-cola>.

⁷ Center for Science in the Public Interest. Sweet Excess: Largest Restaurant Chains Consistently Serve Up Drinks with More than a Day's Worth of Added Sugars; A Restaurant Menu Survey. Published July 2021.

⁸ Malik VS, Hu FB. Sugar-sweetened beverages and cardiometabolic health: An update of the evidence. *Nutrients*

⁹ de Ruyter, J. C., Olthof, M. R., Seidell, J. C., & Katan, M. B. (2012). A trial of sugar-free or sugar-sweetened beverages and body weight in children. *The New England journal of medicine*, 367(15), 1397–1406.

¹⁰ Moynihan, P. J., & Kelly, S. A. (2014). Effect on caries of restricting sugars intake: systematic review to inform WHO guidelines. *Journal of dental research*, 93(1), 8–18.

¹¹ Yang, Q., Zhang, Z., Gregg, E. W., Flanders, W. D., Merritt, R., & Hu, F. B. (2014). Added sugar intake and cardiovascular diseases mortality among US adults. *JAMA internal medicine*, 174(4), 516–524.

¹² U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025. 9th Edition. December 2020. Available at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)

¹³ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. Community Health Survey 2019; public use dataset accessed on July 28, 2021.

¹⁴ New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. (2013, June). Diabetes-related Mortality in New York City.

<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/epi/databrief28.pdf>.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶ Yang, J., Zheng, Y., Gou, X., Pu, K., Chen, Z., Guo, Q., Ji, R., Wang, H., Wang, Y., & Zhou, Y. (2020). Prevalence of comorbidities and its effects in patients infected with SARS-CoV-2: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *International journal of infectious diseases: IJID : official publication of the International Society for Infectious Diseases*, 94, 91–95. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijid.2020.03.017>

¹⁷ Woolf SH, Chapman DA, Sabo RT, Weinberger DM, Hill L. Excess Deaths From COVID-19 and Other Causes, March-April 2020. *JAMA*. 2020;324(5):510–513. doi:10.1001/jama.2020.11787

¹⁸ Grummon AH & Hall MG. Sugary drink warnings: A meta-analysis of experimental studies. *PLoS Med.* 2020;17(5):e1003120.

¹⁹ Taillie, L. S., Reyes, M., Colchero, M. A., Popkin, B., & Corvalán, C. (2020). An evaluation of Chile's Law of Food Labeling and Advertising on sugar-sweetened beverage purchases from 2015 to 2017: A before-and-after study. *PLoS medicine*, 17(2), e1003015.

²⁰ Center for Science in the Public Interest. (2021, July 8). New Yorkers Support Added Sugar Warnings on Chain Restaurant Menus.