The Facts about Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Obesity

Obesity has been going up for years while soda consumption has been going down. Why hasn’t obesity gone down with the reduction in soda consumption? Because soft drinks are not driving the rise in obesity.

Soda sales have gone down 12 straight years – to a 30-year low...

- Full-calorie soda sales: Down 17% (2000-2016)¹
- Average calories per serving from beverages: Down 31% (2000-2016)²
- Total beverage calories in schools: Down 90% (since 2004)³
- Calories in American diet from added sugars in soda: Down 39% (1999-2008)⁴

...But obesity kept going up

- Obesity among adults: Up 23.6% (1999-2000 to 2013-14)⁵
- Obesity among children and adolescents aged 2-19: Up 23.7% (1999-2000 to 2013-14)⁶

Soft drinks are not driving obesity or obesity-related diseases like diabetes.

The rise we’ve seen in obesity is driven by an increase in food calories, not sugar from beverages. From 1970 to 2010, calories in the average U.S. diet increased from 2,024 a day to 2,481 a day. That’s an added 457 calories a day, and 401 of the added calories come from more fats, oils and starches in our diet. Only 40 of those added calories come from sugar — from all sources.⁷

Calories from sugar-sweetened beverages are a small part of the American diet.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture analysis of government NHANES data shows that when all sugar-sweetened beverages are combined, they account for only about 6% of calories in the average diet.

The Data: Soda and other sugar-sweetened beverages are not driving obesity.

If calories and added sugars consumed from beverages are going down and obesity is going up — how can soda and sugar-sweetened beverages be a unique or significant contributor to obesity? The numbers just don’t add up.