

No More Soft Drinks! – Fall 2006

Some experts believe that simply eliminating soda pop from your child's diet may be the easiest way to reduce the risk of childhood obesity and diabetes. In fact, medical researchers at Children's Hospital in Boston found children who consume one extra sugar-sweetened drink a day have a 60% greater chance of becoming obese. With 14 percent of America's children now obese or overweight and a doubling of childhood diabetes cases in the United States, these findings carry even greater importance. Researchers now blame soda pop consumption as playing a major role in the increase of childhood obesity. According to the US Department of Agriculture, the consumption of soft drinks has increased 500% in the last 50 years and children and adolescents are major consumers:

- Over half of 8 year olds drink a soda daily.
- Children who drink soft drinks consume almost 200 more calories per day than their counterparts who don't.
- Teenagers in the US now drink twice as much soda as milk.
- Average soda consumption among teens between the ages of 13 and 18 is two to three or more cans a day.
- Why is soda pop so unhealthy? It provides calories, sugar, sodium and (sometimes) caffeine with no nutritional value. In fact, soft drinks constitute the leading source of added sugars in the diet, amounting to an average of 36.2 grams daily for girls and 57.7 grams for boys.

So how should parents handle soda pop? Think of it as “liquid candy” – a special “occasional” treat, not a daily beverage. Instead switch to low fat milk or water (add a slice of lemon or lime for some extra pizzazz!), and help your child build a healthy habit for life!