

April 20, 2006

Committee on Nutrition Standards for Food in Schools
Institute of Medicine
500 Fifth Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20001

Dear Committee Member:

As you know, water is the indispensable beverage and is adequate for meeting the hydration needs of most people. For athletes engaged in continuous, high-intensity aerobic workouts that last for 60 minutes or more, sports drinks are an option for preventing dehydration and restoring fluids, electrolytes, and nutrients. Since most students do not participate in 60-minute high-intensity workouts during school hours, we encourage your committee to recommend that sports drinks not be sold or served in schools during the school day.

The American College of Sports Medicine's position on "Exercise and Fluid Replacement" states that "[d]uring exercise lasting less than one hour, there is little evidence of physiological or physical performance differences between consuming a carbohydrate-electrolyte drink and plain water."¹ Even so, sports drinks are marketed heavily to non-athletes, for whom the beverages confer no nutritional (or performance) advantages. In addition, the acid in sports drinks can erode dental enamel.^{2,3}

Some school officials have viewed sports drinks as healthier alternatives to soft drinks. Though sports drinks are lower in calories, they are similar to diluted soft drinks. While an average 20-oz. cola soft drink contains 220 calories, a typical 20-oz. sports drink contains 160 calories.⁴ The main ingredients in sports drinks include water, sugar (high-fructose corn syrup), and salt.

Children are over-consuming added sugars. According to the USDA Food Guide (based on estimated calorie, nutrient, and food group requirements and estimated discretionary calorie allowances), the estimated maximum added sugars allowance for 4-18 year old girls is 16 to 48 grams a day.⁵ The average 6-11 year old (boy or girl) consumes 92 grams a day of added sugars.⁶ The average 12-17 year old girl consumes 96 grams a day of added sugars.⁷ The estimated maximum added sugars allowance for 4-18 year old boys is between 16 to 96 grams per day. The average 12-17 year old boy consumes 140 grams a day of sugars.⁸

Furthermore, the Dietary Reference Intake for sodium for children (depending upon their age) is no more than 1,500 mg to 2,300 mg of sodium a day.⁹ However, between 75% and 91% of children (depending upon their age) consume more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day.¹⁰ A 20-oz. bottle of Gatorade contains approximately 275 mg of sodium.

Recently, the sale of sports drinks in schools has increased dramatically, more than any other category of beverage. According to the American Beverage Association, the purchase of sports drinks in schools increased by 70% (from 7.8% to 16.3% of total sales) between 2002 and 2004.¹¹ During the same period, the purchase of carbonated soft drinks in schools *decreased* by 24%. It seems that soft drinks are being replaced, at least in part, by sports drinks in schools.

In conclusion, while sports drinks may be appropriate for elite athletes, such as marathon runners and triathletes, they are not appropriate for schoolchildren. We respectfully urge the committee to recommend that sports drinks not be sold or served in schools during the school day.

Sincerely,

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Organizations

American Diabetes Association	Muskegon Community Health Project
American Public Health Association	National Association of Chronic Disease Directors
Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors	National Council of Jewish Women, Greater Bridgeport Section
Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition	National Research Center for Women & Families
The California Black Health Network	New York City Nutrition Education Network
California Center for Public Health Advocacy	New York Coalition for Healthy School Lunches
California Food Policy Advocates	Operation Wellness
Center for Communications, Health and the Environment	Prevention Institute
Center for Informed Food Choices	Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
Center for Science in the Public Interest	Rhode Island Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance
Collaborative Center for Justice, Inc.	Shape Up America!
End Hunger Connecticut! Inc.	Shaping America's Health
FamilyCook Productions	The Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments
The Food Trust	Sustainable Food Systems, LLC
George Washington University Medical Faculty Associates	Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials
HealthyPlanet	Yale Prevention Research Center
Hunter College in the City University of New York, Nutrition Programs	Young People's Healthy Heart Program
Institute for America's Health	
Kids First	
Massachusetts Public Health Association	

For more information on this letter, contact Dr. Margo Wootan or Joy Johanson at the Center for Science in the Public Interest at jjohanson@cspinet.org or 202.777.8351.

¹ American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM). *Exercise and Fluid Replacement*. Indianapolis, IN: ACSM, 1996.

² Van Fraunhofer J, Rogers M. "Effects of Sports Drinks and Other Beverages on Dental Enamel." *General Dentistry* 2005, vol. 53, pp. 28-31.

³ Rees J, Loyn T, McAndrew R. "The Acidic and Erosive Potential of Five Sports Drinks." *The European Journal of Prothodontics and Restorative Dentistry* 2005, vol. 13, pp. 186-190.

⁴ USDA National Nutrient Database for Standard Reference. Accessed at www.nal.usda.gov/fnic/foodcomp/search/ on April 3, 2006.

⁵ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Agriculture. *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, 2005 (Appendices A-2 and A-3). 6th Edition, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, January 2005.

⁶ Guthrie J and Morton J. "Food Sources of Added Sweeteners in the Diets of Americans." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 2000, vol. 100, pp. 43-51.

⁷ Guthrie J and Morton J. "Food Sources of Added Sweeteners in the Diets of Americans." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 2000, vol. 100, pp. 43-51.

⁸ Guthrie J and Morton J. "Food Sources of Added Sweeteners in the Diets of Americans." *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* 2000, vol. 100, pp. 43-51.

⁹ The National Academies. *Dietary Reference Intakes for Water, Potassium, Sodium, Chloride, and Sulfate*. Washington, D.C.: National Academies, 2004.

¹⁰ Briefel R and Johnson C. "Secular Trends in Dietary Intake in the United States." *Annual Review of Nutrition* 2004, vol. 24, pp. 401-431.

¹¹ Westcott R. *Measuring the Purchases of Soft Drinks by Students in U.S. Schools: An Analysis for the American Beverages Association*. Washington, D.C., 2005.