

The Role of Local Health Departments in Promoting Healthy Beverages: Increasing Healthy Beverage Options in Hospitals



Background

Despite recent declines in sugar-sweetened beverage (SSB) consumption, Americans still consume far more SSBs than are good for their health. Recent studies show that SSBs are the single greatest source of added calories in the American diet.¹ In addition, in recent years Americans have consumed an additional 250–300 daily calories compared to several decades ago; nearly half of this increase can be attributed to greater consumption of SSBs.² The consequences of SSB consumption have been demonstrated by research that shows a clear link between the consumption of sugary drinks and higher rates of obesity and other chronic health problems such as diabetes, heart disease, and metabolic syndrome.^{3,4,5}

To reduce the complications associated with consumption of SSBs, local health departments (LHDs) and their community partners are working together to create conditions that help people make healthier choices. One key way that LHDs are working to reduce consumption of SSBs is by partnering with hospitals and healthcare organizations to encourage changes to procurement policies and food and beverage standards that increase healthier beverage options.

Why Focus on Healthcare?

The healthcare sector can play a large role in decreasing consumption of SSBs through changing procurement strategies and promoting consumption of healthier foods and beverages. Hospitals and healthcare systems can largely accomplish these changes by leveraging their buying power and their mission to improve health. By setting institutional standards and supporting policies that increase access to healthier foods and beverages, the healthcare sector can be a leader for other institutions and worksites.



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Story from the Field: Boston Public Health Commission

Over the past few years, the Boston Public Health Commission has implemented a variety of strategies to decrease the availability of SSBs in the city. At the 2013 annual conference of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), the Boston Public Health Commission was honored along with Health Care Without Harm for their collaboration to reduce SSB consumption within Boston-area hospitals. The Boston Hospital Sugar-Sweetened Beverage (SSB) Learning Network was one of 38 public health programs developed nationwide in collaboration with an LHD and selected to receive NACCHO's Model Practice Award.

The Boston Hospital SSB Learning Network convened Boston healthcare organizations to reduce obesity rates by reducing access to SSBs and increasing access to healthier beverages, such as water, as part of a comprehensive Healthy Food in Health Care Program. Over a 14-month period, beginning in December 2010, 10 participating hospitals successfully employed strategies to reduce access to and promotion of SSBs within their institutions. Through the learning network, hospital representatives participated in regular meetings, through which they received technical assistance and resources, shared progress and best practices, and addressed challenges in a peer-learning forum. The strategies implemented by hospitals included eliminating SSB sales, removing sugary beverages from patient trays, providing education at point-of-purchase locations throughout the hospital, and pricing unhealthy beverages higher than healthy choices. In February 2012, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino announced that the hospitals involved in the initiative had made significant progress in decreasing the sale of unhealthy beverages.⁶ Learn more about each hospital's efforts at <http://bit.ly/18TsQQR>.

Recommended Websites

Health Care Without Harm
www.noharm.org/us_canada/

Healthier Hospitals Initiative
<http://healthierhospitals.org>

Resources

Boston Public Health Commission

HEALTHY BEVERAGE TOOLKIT

This toolkit includes best practices for promoting healthy beverage choices based on current science, public health research, and national recommendations and standards. It can be used in a variety of settings, and most materials included in the toolkit can be adapted to suit any institution. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/15LhVjY>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

HEALTHY HOSPITAL CHOICES PROMOTING HEALTHY HOSPITAL FOOD, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, BREASTFEEDING AND LACTATION SUPPORT AND TOBACCO-FREE CHOICES: RECOMMENDATIONS AND APPROACHES FROM AN EXPERT PANEL

In August 2010, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity convened an expert panel on policy and environmental approaches to improve food, physical activity, breastfeeding, and tobacco-free environments in hospitals. The panel identified strategies to improve these environments for employees, patients, and visitors and recommended how to incorporate these strategies into hospital community outreach efforts. This document summarizes the proceedings of the meeting and presents recommendations for action for hospitals and public health practitioners. Learn more at <http://1.usa.gov/x4jay2>.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

HEALTHY HOSPITAL PRACTICE TO PRACTICE SERIES (P2P)

This P2P Series presents case studies of hospitals improving their environments to better support the health of their employees and embody the mission of their organizations. Learn more at <http://1.usa.gov/GzZzGZ>.

Health Care Without Harm

HEALTHY BEVERAGE IMPLEMENTATION TOOLS

The implementation tools available from Health Care Without Harm will assist in planning and implementing a healthy beverage program. Tools include a healthy beverage audit tool, healthy beverage purchasing tracking tool, and SSB purchasing tracking tool. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/1a3Kvdw>.

Health Care Without Harm

HYDRATE FOR HEALTH: A CALL FOR HEALTHY BEVERAGES IN HEALTH CARE

This article highlights the connections between SSBs and chronic diseases and strategies that the healthcare sector can implement to improve healthier beverage choices. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/v4mQTM>.

Illinois Public Health Institute

RETHINK YOUR DRINK: CREATING HEALTHIER BEVERAGE ENVIRONMENTS IN HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS WEBINAR

This webinar is intended for healthcare leaders to introduce the topic of SSBs and improving access to healthier beverages in healthcare environments. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/175wQQY>.

Illinois Public Health Institute

RETHINK YOUR DRINK SYMPOSIUM: THE IMPACT OF SUGAR-LOADED BEVERAGES ON OBESITY

This symposium was organized for medical and health professionals about the scientific evidence for the impact of SSBs on health and the contribution they make to obesity and chronic disease. A video of the symposium can be viewed in eight different segments. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/1aPxoI>.

Public Health Law Center, Health Care Without Harm, and the Minnesota Cancer Alliance

MINNESOTA HEALTHY BEVERAGES IN HEALTHCARE TOOLKIT

This toolkit includes a series of resources designed to inform and support efforts to promote healthy beverage choices and reduce consumption of unhealthy products within workplace settings in Minnesota, with a special focus on healthcare settings. Although the series focuses on beverages, many of the principles and approaches can also be applied to the food environment. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/GBrl6p>.

Illinois Public Health Institute, American Heart Association, and Health Care Without Harm

RETHINK YOUR DRINK: HEALTHY BEVERAGES TOOLKIT FOR HEALTHCARE

This toolkit is a resource for hospitals and healthcare institutions interested in reducing consumption of SSBs. Learn more at <http://bit.ly/175wQQY>.

[ISSUE BRIEF]

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6. Boston Public Health Commission. (2012, Feb. 17). *Ten Boston hospitals work together to reduce consumption of sugary beverages among patients, staff, visitors*. Retrieved Sept. 6, 2013, from <http://www.bphc.org/newsroom/pages/topstoriesview.aspx?id=251>.

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NACCHO

National Association of County & City Health Officials

The National Connection for Local Public Health



Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

The mission of the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) is to be a leader, partner, catalyst, and voice for local health departments.

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