

## **Join the Soda-Free Summer Challenge to cut down on added sugar!**

We've had a display up at a few of this summer's events with a big 5-gallon water-cooler water bottle filled with sugar, along with an accompanying sign that explains that this is the amount of sugar that would be consumed in a year if 1 soda was drunk per day for a year. It's rather impressive and is an attention-grabbing display. People often stop and give the sort of reaction that those of us in healthcare hope for: some shock, surprise, photo-taking and sharing, and hopefully a bit of motivation to alter health-related behaviors, specifically the intake of sugar through sugary drinks, like soda. (A picture of the display is posted on the Uinta County Public Health Facebook page.)

It doesn't take much preaching, either. Most of us just know in our gut that consuming a mound of sugar like that isn't good for our bodies. And we're right about that. Too much added sugar (the kind common in processed foods, like desserts, sodas, juices, etc.) can make us sick. Among scientists and doctors, it is common knowledge that excess added sugar intake is a major contributing factor for the chronic diseases that are becoming so prevalent and that are straining our health care system: heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and obesity (and is possibly a contributor to cancer and dementia, as well.)

How much sugar is too much? The World Health Organization recommends consuming no more than 6 tsp. of added sugar per person per day. This doesn't apply to whole fruits and vegetables, rather, it refers to *added* sugars. Added sugars are what is added to processed foods, and where naturally occurring fiber is removed. On the food labels, sugars are listed in grams. Four grams of sugar is roughly equivalent to one teaspoon.

While the recommendation is 6 teaspoons per day, the average American consumes around 23 tsp/day according to the US Department of Agriculture (as cited in a 2016 AP News article by Candice Choi.)

Here are a few quick tips for reducing added sugar intake:

Eat good food. Meals and snacks (2 per day is recommended) that are high in protein, fiber and fat keep blood sugar regulated and cut down on sugar cravings.

Take it slow. The goal isn't to never eat sugar, but to be aware and smart about food choices. Start by cutting down on the biggest added sugar sources.

Watch out for sneaky sugars, and read labels when shopping. Some of the obvious and big culprits for added sugars are: soda, juice, sports and energy drinks, candy, dessert foods, breakfast cereal. But there are tricky foods that aren't necessarily known for sweetness, like salad dressings, sauces, soups, bread, crackers, pretzels, etc. that can hide a lot of added sugar, too. There are a lot of different names for sugar, too, such as high fructose corn syrup, evaporated cane juice, dextrose, etc., and it is a good idea to be aware of these.

And with that said, Uinta County Public Health invites you to join the "Soda-Free Summer Challenge" for what is left of the summer! (And we're going to extend it into the Soda-Free September Challenge, too!) Come down to the office for help and support in achieving your health goals, including reducing added sugar intake and get a nice water bottle to get you going!