So... Are sugary drinks really as bad as they say?

Is it bad for our health?

When you drink a soda or other sugary drinks, you ingest a lot of empty calories very quickly. You also feed bacteria into your mouth, which produces acid that dissolves your teeth. These large amounts of quickly-digested sugar triggers bodily processes which can cause fat to build up around the organs, make the body resistant to insulin, and lead to weight gain. In turn, this can raise your blood pressure, cause inflammation, increase your cholesterol and lead to diabetes or heart disease. Almost 6 million South Africans have diabetes.

The Health Promotion Levy is a health tax on the amount of extra sugar added to drinks. The more sugar is added to a drink, the more tax is added. The current rate is less than half the global recommended amount.

HEALA
Food Justice Now!

Sugary drink-related facts

- **1 out of every 4 diabetes** cases in SA are caused by sugary drinks.[1]
- **1 in 10 heart disease** cases are caused by sugary drinks.[1]
- SA children have **twice the global obesity rate.**[2]
- Even **one sugary drink** weekly raises a child's **obesity & diabetes risk.**[3]
- Diabetes is the **second biggest killer** in SA.[4]
- Sugary drink consumers face **20x higher tooth erosion risk.**[5]

Is it bad for our pockets?

The diseases associated with sugary drink consumption require expensive and ongoing treatment. People who suffer from these diseases are more likely to have lower productivity levels and have a significantly higher risk of experiencing disability, which impacts the overall economy.

R2.7 billion
is the cost of treating diabetes in the SA public sector alone.[6]

R60 000
is about the cost of diabetes per person per year for medical care.[7]

13 000
people go blind in South Africa each year from diabetes.[8]

"Sugary drink taxes" work!

The tax was implemented in 2018 and already we have seen great benefits:

- ✓ We have seen a real reduction in how many sugary drinks South Africans are buying, instead opting to drink water.[9]
- ✓ Soda companies have reduced the amount of sugar in their drinks to avoid the tax.[10]
- ✓ It generates billions of rands in public funds which we can use to fund our struggling health system. It could generate up to R5 billion a year if taxed at the appropriate rate of 20%.[11]

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5. Hasheminejad, N., Malek Mohammadi, T., Mahmoodi, M.R. et al. The association between beverage consumption pattern and dental problems in adolescents: a cross sectional study. BMC Oral Health 20, 74 (2020).
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9. A year after the implementation of the HPL, there was a 51% reduction in sugar, 52% reduction in calories and 29% reduction in volume of SSBs purchased per person per day and an increase in water intake.
10. Stacey N., Mudara C., Ng S.W., et al. Sugar-based beverage taxes and beverage prices: Evidence from South Africa's Health Promotion Levy. Soc Sci Med. 2019 Oct;238:112465
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