

## Soft Drinks and the Price We Pay

The month of February is Children's Dental Awareness Month. Your children may have already come home from school with handouts from dentists who are visiting their schools and educating them on oral hygiene and healthy snacks. This last month the Utah Dental Association released an article on the consumption of soft drinks in our nation. I would like to share some of that information with you to help you be more aware of the effects soft drinks have on you and your children's oral and physical health.

Soda is a 14 billion-gallon-a-year industry in the United States, including sugar-sweetened beverages and sports drinks. This amounts to 506 12-ounce servings of soft drinks annually per person. That's almost 1-1/2 cans of soda pop each day, per person, and about 50 gallons per person per year. This statistic doesn't include diet soft drinks. It is estimated that the average boy drinks more than 700 12-ounce cans of soda each year or two cans a day. The average can of soda contains 10 teaspoons of sugar (usually in the form of corn syrup) and more than 140 calories.

Some of the effects of soft drink use include an increase in obesity, diabetes, calcium-robbed bones, kidney stones, osteoporosis and overall poor health. Because of the effects of soda on the overall health of Americans, legislatures are considering a tax or fee on soft drinks to aid in combating the nation's growing medical costs

Aside from the overall physical effects soft drinks have on our general health, when drinking soft drinks and other sugary liquids, you're exposing your teeth to something over time that even with good brushing and flossing, can break down the hard enamel that protects your teeth. Acid from both bacteria in your mouth and from the soft drinks causes enamel and any exposed root surfaces to soften and decay. When left untreated, tooth decay can lead to larger cavities, root canals, crowns and possible tooth loss. The costs to restore teeth due to soft drinks can be expensive.

An area where parents can help their children is by limiting the amount of soda and other sugary liquids their children drink, especially when wearing braces or retainers. Drink other alternatives to soft drinks, such as water. Read labels for sugar, which can also be called high-fructose corn syrup, sucrose, glucose or dextrose and choose those with lower concentrations.

Even if you see your dentist regularly and have your teeth treated for tooth decay, if you continue to drink an excess of soft drinks, decay will return.

You do not have to stop drinking sodas and other sugary liquids entirely, but gradually start to limit your daily intake. The frequency of consumption is more or equally important as the amount consumed. Drink liquids low in sugar and acid, and be sure to maintain good oral health

by brushing, flossing and visiting the dentist. Regular fluoride treatments at the dentist and using toothpaste with fluoride will help combat the effects of sugary drinks.

For more information, visit the ADA website at [www.ADA.org](http://www.ADA.org) or visit our website at [www.excellencebychoice.net](http://www.excellencebychoice.net).