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TNS / DREAMSTIME

Sports drinks named for fruits are aggressively marketed to teens and made to look like a healthy alternative to sugary sodas.

the big gulp

Teens are chugging more sports drinks, study finds

Tribune News Service

The campaign by public health advocates against sugar-sweetened sodas may have had an unintended consequence: Teens are drinking more sugar-sweetened sports drinks.

Drinks shown in advertisements being consumed by impossibly fit athletes and named for fruits like mango, kiwi and blackberry are aggressively marketed to teens. The packaging and ads make them look like a healthy alternative to sugary sodas, widely

blamed for contributing to obesity, diabetes, tooth decay and other ills.

Now, researchers at Harvard University have found a small but significant increase in the weekly consumption of high-carbohydrate sports drinks among teens. The study, which appeared recently in the journal *Pediatrics*, analyzed national data from the 2010 National Youth Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey and the 2015 Youth Risk and Behavior Survey. The researchers focused on teens because they're more likely than younger kids to buy their

own beverages.

In 2015, more than 57 percent of the more than 22,000 high school students surveyed reported having at least one sports drink in the prior week, up from 56 percent in 2010.

Conversely, between 2007 and 2015, there has been a 7.6 percent drop in the number of youths reporting they drank one soda in the prior week, according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System.

The Harvard study also found that 31 percent of

teens consumed between one and three sports drinks in the previous week, and about 12 percent reported having four to six such drinks.

WHO DRINKS THE MOST

Teens who played on one or more sports teams were likely to consume one or more sports drinks each day.

So were teens who watched more than two hours of television, which researchers said was a "worrisome reflection of the association between TV viewing, commercial advertisements and

plus inbrief

ACUPUNCTURE AND FERTILITY

Wellness services are the latest trend at fertility clinics. One of the most popular is acupuncture. The traditional Chinese treatment involves placing sterile needles at various points on the body to manipulate the "chi," or energy flow.

Some acupuncture practitioners say that for women undergoing in vitro fertilization, the procedure can increase blood flow, which may increase the chances of an embryo implanting.

The scientific literature on this subject has been mixed, and there have been questions about the quality of the evidence. The most recent guidelines, released in 2017, from the American Society for Reproductive Medicine, say there is "fair" evidence that acupuncture performed around the time of embryo transfer does not improve live-birth rates.

Recently, in the American Medical Association journal JAMA, researchers report the results of a study that drilled down on that question using a randomized clinical trial. It involved looking at women who received either acupuncture or what the researchers called "sham acupuncture." There were 848 women from Australia and New Zealand in the study, with a mean age of 35.4 years. All were undergoing a fresh IVF cycle. Caroline Smith, the lead investigator, and her co-authors wrote: "The findings do not support the use of acupuncture to improve the rate of live births among women undergoing IVF."

— THE WASHINGTON POST



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obesity."

Boys were more likely than girls to guzzle the drinks, while Hispanic and black youths consumed more sports drinks than white children, researchers found.

BETTER OPTIONS

But experts in nutrition warn that the average child — especially one parked in front of a TV — doesn't need a sports drink that is loaded with electrolytes and carbohydrates, flavors and sweeteners.

"The better option is water or unsweetened beverages," said Nyree Dardarian, a licensed dietitian and director of the Center for Integrated Nutrition and Performance at Drexel University. There is no purpose to consuming all the carbohydrates in sports drinks unless you are competing in a high-intensity game, not at a high school soccer or softball practice, she said.

A 20-ounce bottle of orange Gatorade has a hefty 34 grams of sugar, 36 grams of carbs, and 140 calories. Consume two or more sports drinks each week and over a year it can translate into extra pounds, said Dardarian.

"Don't drink your calories," said Dardarian. A more positive message would be to eat the calories. Water and an orange would pro-

vide 100 percent of the recommended dietary allowance for vitamin C for kids ages 4 to 18, plus fiber, she said.

Healthier options for kids include flavoring water by squeezing fresh fruit into it, adding a splash of fruit juice, or drinking flavored seltzers, she said.

The same advice applies for adults. Rehydrating after a yoga class with a fresh-pressed juice adds 200 or more unneeded calories to your diet, she said.

There are occasions where having a sports drink is appropriate, Dardarian said. A cyclist planning a 100-mile ride or a kid in a daylong soccer tournament might want to use sports drinks to stay hydrated.

"If the child is only playing 20 minutes or rotating into the game, they just need water," Dardarian said.

Overall, Americans have consumed fewer calories from the sugary drinks in recent years. Since the advent of Philadelphia's tax on sweetened beverages, Philadelphians are 64 percent less likely to gulp down a sports drink, researchers at the Dornsife School of Public Health at Drexel University concluded. Their study results were published in the April 12 issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

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