Black Teens Reap Bigger Benefits From Soda Bans

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Turns out state policies that ban or discourage young people guzzling down those fizzy soft drinks reduce black adolescents' soda intake twice as much as that of other groups, according to a new study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* and reported by My Health News Daily.

For the study, researchers from several U.S. universities conducted a survey of almost 91,000 students in 33 states and the District of Columbia. The survey's goal? To check whether there was a link between 2000 to 2006 policy changes that totally kicked junk food off school property and at events (for example in vending machines, snack bars, concessions stands and parties) and students' 2007 soda consumption and their height-to-weight ratios (a.k.a. body mass index, or BMI). What's more, scientists also checked for any racial or ethnic connection to the policy changes.

The result? Findings showed in states that banned or discouraged soft drinks, students' overall daily soda consumption dropped by an average of 10 percent. But African-American students' soda intake dropped by almost 20 percent each day. This decrease was equal to 50 fewer calories each day.

The big news is that these new findings also have broad implications in the fight against type 2 diabetes and youth obesity. "Soda is widely considered to be a contributor to the increase in obesity because [in several past studies] it has been associated with excess energy intake and weight gain," study authors said. "[Soda] became a larger source of energy intake among adolescents during the same period that obesity prevalence increased."

But even in groups that drank less soda, researchers found no decline in the students' BMIs. Hmm, wait a second.

If black teens are drinking less soda, why aren't they shedding pounds? Well, one reason might be that the survey relied on students self-reporting their soda intake and height and weight. Another reason could be that consuming 50 less calories each day may not be enough to trigger weight loss. Or, guess what? Students could be scarfing down other sugary foods and beverages to compensate for drinking less soda, researchers suggested.

Whatever the case may be, one thing is clear: School policy changes that ban students' soda consumption mostly affect black teens.

Click here to read more about why sugary drinks pose such a health risk to everyone.

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