

**Media Release
24 September 2019**

1 in 6 teens consume over 5kg of sugar per year from sugary drinks

Cancer Council calls sour on sugary drinks

Cancer Council is calling for a national campaign to reduce teenagers' consumption of sugary drinks with new research showing one in six (17 per cent) teenagers consume at least 5.2 kilograms of sugar each year from sugary drinks alone.

Cancer Council Australia's National Secondary Students' Diet and Activity survey looked at the habits of more than 9,000 students across the country and found that boys were the biggest consumers of sugary drinks with 22 per cent having a litre or more per week, compared to 11 per cent of girls.

The survey also showed that teens living in low socio-economic areas were more likely to consume high amounts of sugary drinks each week compared to those living in high socio-economic areas.

Clare Hughes, Chair, Nutrition and Physical Activity Committee, Cancer Council Australia explained the effects of sugary drinks.

"Sugary drinks contribute the most added sugar to Australians' diets and the news that one in six teens consume more than 5kg of sugar each year through sugar-sweetened beverages alone is alarming."

"Sugar-sweetened beverages, such as soft drink, cordial and sports drinks, are energy dense but provide no nutritional value to our diet. When we consume more kilojoules than our body needs this can lead to weight gain and obesity later in life. Obesity is a leading risk factor for type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and 13 types of cancer including endometrial, oesophageal, renal, gallbladder, bowel and postmenopausal breast cancers."

While the survey showed that the proportion of teenagers' consuming four or more cups of sugary drinks per week has declined from 30 per cent to 17 per cent since 2009, Ms Hughes explained teens were still consuming sugar-sweetened beverages at unacceptably high levels and more needed to be done to protect the health of younger generations.

"Western Australia had the steepest declines in sugary drink consumption and now just one in 10 students consume a litre or more of sugary drinks each week. This decline coincides with the repeated airing of the LiveLighter® Sugary Drinks campaign in this state so we are urging the Government to use these results to roll out the campaign nationally."

The LiveLighter® program launched in Western Australia in 2012 and aims to increase awareness and understanding of the health consequences of being above a healthy weight and encourage the adoption of simple changes towards leading a healthier lifestyle.

LiveLighter® also works with retailers, universities, community organisations and all levels of government to push for environmental changes to make the healthy choice the easy choice. While the campaign is targeted at adults, teens are naturally exposed to these marketing messages and benefit when parents make healthier choices at home.

In addition to rolling out the LiveLighter® campaign nationally, Cancer Council is urging Government to introduce a host of measures to reduce the impact of poor diet. These

include improved regulation for junk food marketing, the introduction of added sugar labelling and a 20 per cent health levy on sugary drinks.

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For media enquiries please contact Tegan Brown on 0431 248 967 or email media@cancer.org.au

About the National Secondary Students Diet and Activity

The National Secondary Students' Diet and Activity (NaSSDA) survey is an initiative of Cancer Council Australia that provides regular monitoring of young people's beliefs and behaviours surrounding diet and physical activity, as well as their experience of food marketing, to inform obesity prevention policy development and evaluate implemented strategies.

This report summarised the current prevalence of sugary drink consumption among Australian secondary school students and changes over time. It also explored the potential impact of the Western Australian LiveLighter® *Sugary Drinks* campaign on consumption levels in that state.

Nationally representative cross-sectional samples of Australian secondary school students in year levels 8 to 11 (ages 12 to 17 years) were surveyed in 2009-10 (n=13,790 from 238 schools), 2012-13 (n=10,309 from 196 schools) and 2018 (n=9,102 from 104 schools) using a self-report web-based questionnaire.

You can view the report [here](#).