

SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Updated April 28, 2016

Effective May 2, 2016, Children's Minnesota will remove sugar-sweetened beverages and increase our better-for-you offerings as part of our mission to champion the health needs of children and their families. We are proud to offer healthy foods and beverages that support the health of our patients, families, visitors, employees, professional staff, volunteers and community members.

The following information is designed to help you share information about this change and answer questions about our sugar-sweetened beverages policy. Visit the Children's | Be Well blog for more background information. If you have a question not addressed below, email BeWellCoordinator@childrensMN.org.

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General questions about the sugar-sweetened beverages policy

1. What is happening?

As part of our commitment to providing a culture of health for our patients, families, visitors, employees, professional staff, volunteers and the communities we serve, Children's is eliminating sugar-sweetened beverages (beverages that are sweetened with added sugars or other caloric sweeteners) in our facilities. As we eliminate sugar-sweetened beverages from our facilities, we will be replacing them with better-for-you beverage alternatives.

On a separate but related note, we will also be removing the deep-fat fryer from our St. Paul Smith & Grand cafeteria as we continue to look at the food and beverages we offer and our responsibility to model healthy behaviors.

2. Why is Children's Minnesota committed to making the better-for-you choice the easy choice?

As a health care organization and a pediatric system that lives by our value to put "Kids first" Children's Minnesota has an obligation to model healthier behavior to help make the better choice the easy choice for all who visit and work in our facilities. Given this, providing better-for-you beverage options within the organization is a priority.

3. What are sugar-sweetened beverages?

Children's policy considers sugar-sweetened beverages those that are pre-sweetened with added sugar or other caloric sweeteners. They include carbonated beverages with added sugars, fruit drinks, sports drinks, pre-sweetened and pre-made tea and coffee drinks, energy drinks, and any other beverages to which sugar, high fructose corn syrup, evaporated can juice, honey, sucrose or other caloric sweetener has been added.

4. Why is Children's Minnesota no longer offering sugar-sweetened beverages and deep-fried foods?

Making healthy food and beverage choices can help aid in the prevention of chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, fatty liver disease, heart disease and many of the most common cancers. As a health care organization and a pediatric system, Children's Minnesota believes we have an obligation to provide better-for-you food and beverage options for all we serve. Starting May 2, 2016, we will no longer offer pre-made sugar-sweetened beverages and deep-fried foods on our cafeteria menus (currently only being offered at the St. Paul campus) because:

- **Sugar-sweetened beverages** are the top source of added sugar in U.S. diets today.
- **Deep-fried foods** are usually high in fat, particularly the types of fats that are bad for your health. They offer little in the way of nutritional value while putting you at higher risk for certain health conditions.

Removing the deep-fat fryer from the St. Paul Smith & Grand cafeteria will be consistent with our Minneapolis and Children's Business Campus cafeterias, which do not have fryers.

5. When will these changes take place?

All Children's Minnesota hospitals, clinics and administrative offices will stop selling sugar-sweetened beverage options by **May 2, 2016**. Some facilities may begin making changes sooner to prepare for the May 2 go-live, including not replenishing supplies of sugar-sweetened beverages as they run out. The deep-fat fryer will be removed from the Smith & Grand cafeteria by May 2, 2016 as well.

NOTE: Coffee, tea and other drinks made on-the-spot with flavored syrups or other added sugars and sold in our coffee shops will now “default” to sugar-free syrups and flavorings; however flavored syrups with added sugars will still be available upon request.

6. What beverages will be available for purchase at Children’s Minnesota?

Children’s is promoting the sale of better-for-you beverage choices, which include:

- Water (filtered tap, unsweetened, 100% fruit or vegetable-infused, seltzer, or naturally flavored)
- 100% fruit juice (optimal 4 oz. serving size)
- 100% vegetable juice (optimal sodium less than 140 mg per serving)
- Milk and milk alternatives
- Unsweetened teas and coffees
- Diet beverages

7. Will “diet” or other beverages with sugar substitutes be available?

Yes. Children’s has chosen to remove sugar-sweetened beverages from its locations based on clinical research that shows the direct correlations between these beverages and obesity. At this time, there is not enough supporting clinical research that shows a direct link between “diet” beverages and obesity. Though there are many factors that contribute to childhood obesity, research suggests that the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) is one of them. In addition, research suggests that SSBs may contribute to increases in cardiovascular disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, metabolic syndrome, liver disease, and certain types of cancers. Almost half of the added-sugar in an average American diet comes from sugar-sweetened beverages.

8. Will we have a list of what better-for-you beverages will be available?

We are working with our nutrition services team and cafeteria and coffee shop vendors to identify what beverages will be offered. Please note that inventories may vary and items will be adjusted based on sales and specific requests. Here is a list of what we are planning for go-live in May:

- [Starz Café \(Minneapolis\)](#)
- [Smith & Grand Café \(St. Paul\)](#)
- [Canteen \(Children’s Business Campus\)](#)

9. Does this policy apply to clinics or areas that purchase their own beverages for patient/staff use?

Yes, the policy applies to all Children’s facilities. If your clinic is looking for guidance on better-for-you beverage replacements, please contact BeWellCoordinator@childrensMN.org.

10. Will it really be easier to choose better-for-you beverages?

Yes, in addition to removing sugar-sweetened beverages, our cafeterias, gift shops, coffee shops, vending machines and catering menus will have increased availability of better-for-you options. These items will be priced competitively.

11. How will this policy be monitored/maintained?

A review of offerings will be performed regularly at each of our facilities to ensure compliance. Adjustments will be made as needed. This includes reviewing vending, gift shops, pharmacies, cafeterias/cafes and any other areas where we sell food and beverages.

12. Who is part of the sugar-sweetened beverage work group, helping to make these decisions?

Conversations to evaluate sugar-sweetened beverages in our facilities have been taking place for years, starting with a [white paper](#) Children's created in response to the growing trend of childhood obesity in 2012. After receiving a letter of support from Children's professional staff earlier this year, we formed a work group made up of representatives from Children's | Be Well program, nutrition services, facilities, human resources, advocacy, communications and others to begin taking the next steps. A careful review of research and best practices from other health systems guided our initial recommendations, which we then shared with professional staff members, leadership and employees for reaction and support.

13. What (and to whom) does this policy apply?

This sugar-sweetened beverage policy applies to all foods and beverages prepared, supplied, offered for sale or reimbursed by Children's Minnesota to patients*, families, visitors, employees, professional staff and volunteers at Children's Minnesota facilities or functions. This includes, but is not limited to, all cafeterias, vending machines, professional staff lounges, gift shops, coffee shops, pharmacies, family resource centers, catering, on-site contract venues, meal trays and patient nourishment/snacks.

The policy does not apply to foods and beverages that people may bring in for their own personal consumption or provided at off-site Foundation or company events.

****Sugar-sweetened beverages will continue to be made available in limited quantities in each unit and select outpatient areas to be provided to patients if approved by a parent or if recommended by the care team.***

14. What if I have questions about something not outlined here?

We recognize that there may be situations that arise that will need further discussion. Please direct any questions not addressed in this FAQ to BeWellCoordinator@childrensMN.org.

15. Shouldn't we just educate people about healthy choices instead of making these kinds of changes?

Education is an important part of any effort to help people change their behaviors, but it is often not very effective when it is the only strategy. To achieve real change, education must be accompanied by environmental changes that make the healthy choice the easy choice. You will see increased educational signage in our cafeterias and facilities that will help people see the benefits of better-for-you beverage options.

16. Are we making any changes to the foods we offer?

The SSB policy is part of a long-term effort to evaluate our food and beverage options and model healthy behaviors. While it is true that Americans tend to eat too much added sugar in general, not all sugary foods contribute equally to the problem. Nearly half of all added sugar in the American diet comes from sugary beverages. Liquid calories don't make us feel full in the same the way solid food does. When people drink sugar-sweetened beverages they do not compensate by eating less, therefore those calories from the drink become "extra." There is also growing evidence linking sugary drink consumption specifically with the chronic diseases and conditions that many of our patients struggle with and that we see increasing across our communities.

We continue to make improvements to the healthy food options we offer across our facilities including expanding our wellness options. On a separate but related note, **we will be removing the deep-fat fryer from the St. Paul cafeteria, also effective May 2, 2016.** Eliminating the fryer in St. Paul will make us more consistent with the Minneapolis and Children's Business Campus cafeterias which do not have fryers. Deep-fried foods are unusually high in fat, particularly the types of fats that are bad for your health. They offer little in the way of nutritional value while putting you at higher risk for certain health conditions.

17. Will we still offer desserts and candy?

Desserts, pastries, candy and snacks will continue to be available. However, as part of our long-term effort to continue to evaluate our food and beverage options and model healthy behaviors, we will continue to look at how these options are stocked, displayed and marketed.

18. Are other health systems making changes to what they offer?

At least seven hospitals in Minnesota have elected to stop selling sugary beverages, among other food improvements. HealthPartners, Park Nicollet, M Health (Fairview), Essentia, and Allina Health are also reducing or eliminating sales of sugary beverages, as well as making other changes to improve their food and beverage offerings. North Memorial removed its deep-fat fryers a few years ago.

These Minnesota efforts are part of a growing national trend. Cleveland Clinic eliminated their deep-fat fryers and sugar-sweetened beverages in 2010. More than 750 hospitals/health care facilities across the nation have already made changes to improve the foods and beverages they sell and offer at their facilities, including six children's hospitals across the country.

19. Won't this policy affect how much money Children's Minnesota earns from sales of beverages?

As an organization dedicated to improving the health of our communities, this policy aligns with our mission to champion the health needs of children and families and is not being driven by sales. Using smart marketing strategies and offering tastefully appealing replacement products could lead to stronger sales. Organizations that have made these kinds of changes have found that while revenues often dip during the initial transition months, they usually return to, or even exceed, pre-implementation levels.

20. What if this policy has a negative effect on patient/family experience? What about staff experience?

We anticipate that it will take some for all of us to adjust to this change. The experience at other organizations that have already implemented similar changes is that it typically takes six months to get used to this not being a policy, but standard practice.

However, we also created the policy with the intent that a child will never be denied a sugar-sweetened beverage if their parent approves it or if a care team member recommends it. It is our goal that this "Kids first" focus will help us uphold our commitment to providing an exceptional experience for our patients and families.

The sugar-sweetened beverages work group will be regularly reviewing the status of the policy and will make necessary adjustments; however, we are optimistic that this policy will be permanent as we continue to create a culture of health across our facilities.

Sugar-sweetened beverages

21. Fruit juice has a lot of sugar. Why will it continue to be offered?

100% fruit juice provides important vitamins and minerals and has naturally occurring sugar. Sugar is not added during production to increase sweetness. Children's Minnesota

recommends limiting fruit juice to four ounces per serving to manage caloric intake. We also recognize that some of our patients with specific dietary needs, such as those with diabetes, benefit from having juice and similar alternatives available.

22. I consume soda or energy drinks for caffeine to stay alert during long shifts. What alternatives are recommended?

There are many ways to increase alertness that offer other health benefits and do not depend on caffeine including: getting a good night's sleep, regular physical activity, eating well-balanced and regular meals and snacks, especially breakfast, relaxation and meditation and drinking plenty of water. If you really need caffeine, coffee and tea are alternative sources. Diet sodas will also continue to be available.

23. Are you going to remove sugar-packets so that people can't sweeten their beverages after they buy them?

No. Sugar packets and other packets of sweeteners will still be available. The issue with the sugar-sweetened beverages is that most people do not realize just how much sugar they are consuming when they drink them. For example, a typical 20 oz. soda contains 16 heaping teaspoons of sugar.

24. What if I still want to have a regular soda or other sugar-sweetened beverage?

Employees, professional staff, volunteers, patients, families and visitors are able to bring in their own beverages for their personal consumption, but Children's Minnesota will no longer sell them.

Patient care questions

25. Can patients still order their choice of beverage with their meal?

Our policy includes removing sugar-sweetened beverages from inpatient menus and promoting better-for-you options in their place. However, inpatients and select outpatient areas will continue to have access to SSBs by care team recommendation, or family request.

26. What will we do when a care team recommends that a patient has a sugar-sweetened beverage to increase caloric intake?

Sugar-sweetened beverages will always be allowed when recommended by a care team member, including physicians, nurses and registered dietitians.

27. Will units still have beverages stocked on the floors for patient needs?

Yes, beverages will be stocked in each unit and sugar-sweetened beverages will be allowed when recommended by a care team member.

28. What about moms in The Mother Baby Center locations? Are they affected by the policy?

Allina Health has also introduced a policy to remove sugar-sweetened beverages from their facilities. Menu offerings between Children's Minnesota and The Mother Baby Centers will now be more consistent.

29. Many patients use ginger ale for nausea management. What are alternatives?

Ginger is a widely used remedy for nausea; however, most ginger ales on the market today actually do not have much, if any, real ginger in them. Any product containing ginger can help to settle an upset stomach, such as ginger tea, ginger snaps, or crystallized ginger. If you are looking for other dietary tips for nausea management, consider: snacking on crackers, toast or dry cereal; eating more frequent small meals and snacks; eating bland foods that don't have a strong odor and avoiding fatty spicy foods.

30. What should I tell patients or their family members who ask why we don't sell sugar-sweetened beverages?

Please use the following talking points to speak positively about this change.

- Effective May 2, 2016, Children's Minnesota is removing sugar-sweetened beverages from our facilities as part of our mission to champion the health needs of children and families.
- We are proud to offer better-for-you beverages that support the health of all who visit and work in our facilities.
- Personal choice is valued, and individuals may bring in beverages from home.
- Patients, families and community members can visit our website at childrensMN.org for more information about this change or email us at BeWellCoordinator@childrensMN.org with questions and comments.