



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Alabama Obesity Task Force urges the public: 'ReThink Your Drink'

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Alabama Obesity Task Force has launched a new yearlong campaign called "ReThink Your Drink" which focuses on making healthy choices when deciding what to drink and reducing the amount of sugar-sweetened beverages that Alabamians currently have in their diet.

The first core message of the new campaign is to choose water in the place of sweetened drinks. As an example, a 20-ounce soda or sweet tea contains around 16 teaspoons of added sugar. This translates into about 240 empty calories. That added sugar really adds up, especially considering the American Heart Association recommends individuals consume only six to nine teaspoons a day.

"Drinking plenty of water is essential in staying healthy and hydrated," Miriam Gaines, task force member and former director of the Nutrition and Physical Activity Division of the Alabama Department of Public Health, said. "In addition to drinking water, future messages we will promote are to watch calories, and replace sugar-sweetened beverages with skim or 1 percent low fat milk."

When the body has excess weight, referred to as obesity, it inhibits some of the body's normal functions and can lead to health problems. In fact, obesity can put a person at a high risk for many diseases including Type 2 diabetes and certain cancers. Obesity can also cause a buildup of plaque in the arteries that can lead to coronary heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke. Alabama is ranked 5th most obese state, with almost 67 percent of the population either overweight or obese. Obesity causes an economic concern, too. In 2008, medical care costs related to obesity reached \$147 billion in the U.S.

The ReThink Your Drink campaign materials will be showcased at the upcoming Alabama Wellness RX Health Summit hosted by the Alabama Obesity Task Force and Alabama Action for Healthy Kids on Oct. 29 at the Pelham Civic Complex.

The Alabama Obesity Task Force was established to address overweight and obesity issues through advocacy, policies, environmental changes and programs that support healthy lifestyle changes. It is a volunteer organization comprised of 172 members that represent a diverse variety of organizations.

If you are interested in joining the Alabama Obesity Task Force, you may fill out and submit an application form online. For more information, visit www.adph.org/obesity.

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