

The economic costs of sugar on human health

[Business](#)



The Economic Costs of Sugar on Human Health It is undeniable how much healthcare costs can strain individuals and the economy. Many people throughout the nation struggle daily to try to pay off these debts.

Sugar is one of the biggest contributors to healthcare costs because of how cheap sugary the foods are and how much the foods are advertised. While many may claim that the direct and indirect costs of sugar consumption do not have adverse effects on the economy as a whole, sugar costs become problematic depending on the quantity consumed because it can have detrimental effects on the body resulting in a high cost to society. Due to the cheap nature of many sugary goods, people are eating too much and causing various health problems. Many low-income families rely on sugar-based foods for their main meals due to how cheap the products are.

According to a peer-reviewed research article titled “ The Association Between Food Prices and the Blood Glucose Level of US Adults With Type 2 Diabetes” by Anekwe T. D.

and Rahkovsky I. (2014), health economists, found that “ Food prices had a greater association with blood sugar for low-income people than for higher-income people.” It’s no wonder why there are so many health related problems associated with sugar when there are so many people relying on sugary foods. In fact, many places are trying to help alleviate these sugar-induced health problems by sugar taxes. According to another peer-reviewed article titled “ The Potential Impact of a 20% Tax on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages on Obesity in South African Adults: A Mathematical Model” by Mercy Manyema et al.

(2014), a group of researchers with a background on health, a new tax on sugary goods is predicted to reduce the number of obese adults “ by over 220 000.” Such a tax may encourage people to eat healthy alternatives, driving the prices down. In addition, the health of many children is threatened due to the availability of many cheap, sugar-based goods. According to a study titled “ Sugar availability, sugar consumption and dental caries” by Leo M. Sreebny (2006), a recipient for the International Association for Dental Research Science award, for children 12 years of age, “ there is a significant positive correlation between the per capita availability of sugar and dental caries.” As many habits formed as children are carried into adulthood, it is highly likely that they would continue to overeat sugar and gain even more health problems.

Even with so much research indicating that sugary goods have a negative effect on humans, there are still groups that argue against this point. According to Roberto A. Ferdman from The Washington Post, the Global Energy Balance Network has argued that the focus of a healthier lifestyle should not be reducing sugary foods. The main problem with their claim is that it is unreliable. Their claim loses any backing when it is seen that their research is funded by Coca-Cola, a main distributor of sugary drinks. As a whole, there are numerous health problems that result from cheap sugary goods.

Not only is the problem that sugary foods are too cheap, but another major factor is the widespread advertising. Companies invest so much money each year into convincing their audience to buy their sugary goods. According to

The Nutrition Source (n. d.), a page created by Harvard dedicated to the health aspects of food, “ Beverage companies in the US spent roughly \$3.

2 billion marketing carbonated beverages in 2006.” With so much money invested, and how connected we are today, a vast number of people will see the advertising. Even if the audience does not drop everything to go buy a soda, the ads will likely subconsciously affect their decisions. The Nutrition Source (n. d.

) also claims that half of a billion dollars of the advertising is focused on children and teenagers. A study titled ““ I saw Santa drinking soda!’ Advertising and children’s food preferences” by E. D. Lioutas and I. Tzimitra-Kalogianni (2015), professionals with background in agriculture, shows how the advertising towards children is making its mark.

They report that, due to excessive advertising, “ a significant proportion of children (47. 4%) frequently consume unhealthy foods” (E. D. Lioutas & I. Tzimitra-Kalogianni, 2015).

Children these days are likely to continually be exposed to many advertisements. If they are viewing so many ads and they are eating such unhealthy, sugary foods, their health can only decline which is a serious problem considering that they are the ones that would be teaching the bad habits to their kids when they grow older. Children need to know the importance of health and the impact that sugar can make. Preventing the sugar-based ads from being shown could be a way to help children’s health. According to peer-reviewed research titled “ The cost-effectiveness of

removing television advertising of high-fat and/or high-sugar food and beverages to Australian children” by A.

Magnus, M. M. Haby, R. Carter and B. Swinburn (2009), who all have background in public health research, the banning of sugar ads and other nutrient-poor food ads has saved 37, 000 “ disability-adjusted life years” and has “ had a gross incremental cost-effectiveness ratio of AUD\$ 3. 70.

” Not only would it be beneficial for the children who may not be influenced and suffer health problems but it would also be cost-effective. The advertising is a very powerful tool which greatly may affect the audience’s and children’s health by influencing them to buy sugary foods but may be able to be prevented with television bans. One of the most notable economic effects of sugar on human health is the healthcare costs that result from it. Many billions of dollars could be saved and put elsewhere in the economy if it weren’t due to the increasing amount that people consume sugar.

According to a peer-reviewed article titled “ Healthcare Costs Associated with an Adequate Intake of Sugars, Salt and Saturated Fat in Germany: A Health Econometrical Analysis” by Toni Meier et al.

(2015), “ Direct healthcare costs attributable to an unbalanced intake of fat, salt and sugar are calculated to be 16. 8 billion EUR in the year 2008, which represents 7% of the total treatment costs in Germany.” Even Germany, a country not typically portrayed as having health issues, had billions spent on healthcare treatments. Considering this, it is likely that other countries would have spent just as much or possibly even more. In fact, sugar-based healthcare spending has become so significant that research has been done

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to identify if there are ways to reduce it. According to a peer-reviewed article titled “Reducing Added Sugars in the Food Supply Through a Cap-and-Trade Approach” by Sanjay Basu and Kristina Lewis (2014), associates for various health and research centers, “Capping added-sugar emissions into the food supply by food manufacturers at a rate of 1% per year” over a course of 20 years would reduce obesity and type 2 diabetes and would “[avert] approximately \$9.

7 billion in health care spending.” Not only would their plan help alleviate many of the health problems but it would also would reduce the amount of money spent on healthcare which allows for people to spend that money elsewhere and not be put into debt. In addition, the research mentioned earlier by A. Magnus, M. M. Haby, R.

Carter and B. Swinburn (2009) also found that by banning the sugar-based television ads would result in “potential savings in future health-care costs” of about \$300 million allowing for external use. Overall, sugar results in high healthcare costs and could be reduced to save billions. What may be seen as simply a sweet snack to some, sugar influences human health in numerous ways. Sugar has profound economic costs on society through how cheap it is, how much is spent on its advertising, and how much is spent on healthcare resulting from its adverse health conditions. While many may claim that the direct and indirect costs of sugar consumption do not have adverse effects on the economy as a whole, sugar costs become problematic depending on the quantity consumed because it can have detrimental effects on the body resulting in a high cost to society.