Singapore considering tax, ban on high-sugar drinks

Public feedback sought on proposed moves aimed at cutting sugar intake in diabetes fight

Significantly, the Ministry of Health is seeking feedback on four proposed measures to cut sugar intake from drinks, which include entry taxes on all drinks, restrict high-sugar drinks in schools, and restrict advertising of high-sugar products.

The proposed measures include:
- A ban on higher sugar SSBs: This targets beverages with sugar content of 4.2g or more, including sodas, iced tea, sports drinks, and fruit drinks. It aims to address the issue of high-sugar drinks on children and young people.
- Restrictions or bans on advertising of less healthy SSBs: This targets beverages with sugar content of 2.8g or more, including sports drinks, fruit drinks, and iced tea. It aims to reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy beverages.
- Direct pathway via sugar blood levels: This targets beverages with sugar content of 2.8g or more, including sports drinks, fruit drinks, and iced tea. It aims to reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy beverages.
- Public consultations up to 25 next year: This targets beverages with sugar content of 2.8g or more, including sports drinks, fruit drinks, and iced tea. It aims to reduce children’s exposure to unhealthy beverages.

The government is seeking feedback on these measures to ensure they are effective in reducing sugar intake and promoting healthy eating habits.

The possible measures

Restrictions or bans on advertising of less healthy SSBs
- An advertisement or brochure for a less healthy SSB must contain health information, including health risks associated with consuming the beverage.
- The advertisement or brochure must be targeted at children and young people.
- The advertisement or brochure must be displayed during specific time periods on TV and online platforms.
- The restrictions could be extended to include other platforms, such as social media.

Direct pathway via sugar blood levels
- A beverage with sugar content of 2.8g or more must be labelled with a sugar content level.
- The label must be prominently displayed on the package.
- The label must provide consumers with easy-to-understand information on the sugar content of the beverage.

Public consultations up to 25 next year
- Public consultations involving up to 50 people across the island will be held to gather feedback on the proposed measures.
- The consultations will be conducted by health professionals and consumers.
- The feedback will help to refine the proposed measures.

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Nationally, the Ministry of Health is considering several measures to reduce sugar intake in the population, including a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages, a ban on higher sugar SSBs, restrictions on advertising of high-sugar products, and public consultations on the proposed measures.

The proposed measures are part of the government’s efforts to reduce the prevalence of diabetes and other chronic diseases in the population.

The threat of diabetes

Singapore has the highest prevalence of diabetes among developed nations. On average, we consume 12 teaspoons of sugar a day. The Ministry of Health is considering several measures to reduce sugar intake in Singapore’s population, including a tax on sugar-sweetened beverages, a ban on higher sugar SSBs, restrictions on advertising of high-sugar products, and public consultations on the proposed measures.

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Indirect pathway via nutrient imbalance
- Nutritional labels that are simple and easy to understand have been introduced, including a traffic-light coding system for health implications.
- While Singapore has the Healthier Pre-packaged Drinks Scheme, many nutritionists believe consumers are driven by the calorie and fat content of food, not the health implications.
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