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Cook County Officials Launch “Rethink Your Drink” Media Campaign

Cook County Department of Public Health kicks-off ad campaign to educate residents on the health effects of consuming sugar-loaded beverages.

As a new year begins and residents are considering resolutions to make healthy changes, the Cook County Department of Public Health launched a new campaign aimed at educating suburban Cook County (SCC) residents about the damaging health effects of consuming sugar-loaded beverages. The campaign, “Rethink Your Drink,” consists of radio, cable, transit, print and on-line ads that provide education for teens and adults on the health benefits of replacing their sugary drink with one such as water.

“Consumers should not underestimate the enormous health benefits of substituting sugary drinks for healthy options like water or low-fat milk,” said Cook County President Toni Preckwinkle. “Our goal is to spread the word that rethinking what you drink can measurably improve the way you feel, and it’s part of a healthy lifestyle change the county is promoting for all residents. Why not make it a New Year’s resolution for 2012?”

The ads come at a time when nearly one in five adults in SCC drinks one or more regular soda or pop per day and nearly 30% of 12th grade students drank a soda or pop one or more times per day in the last week.

“According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sugar sweetened beverages are the largest source of added sugars in the diet of U.S. youths, and the increased caloric intake resulting from these beverages is one factor contributing to the prevalence of obesity among adolescents in the United States,” said CCDPH interim chief operating officer Sandra Martell, RN, DNP. “It is important for our residents to understand the potential health risks associated with the excess consumption of sugar-loaded beverages.”

One of the fastest growing epidemics facing our residents today is obesity. Between 1995 and 2010, the obesity prevalence among Illinois adults rose by nearly 65 percent, from 16.7 percent to 27.6 percent. More than the two thirds of adults and one in four high school students in suburban Cook County reported being either overweight or obese and the health consequences are devastating. Obesity affects our quality of life and is linked with an increased risk of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, cancer, and heart disease.

The campaign is funded with a grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Funding from this grant also supports continued collaboration with other Cook County departments, local municipalities, schools, community-based organizations and with other partnering agencies to address the obesity epidemic through a comprehensive strategy that includes policies at the county and municipal level.

To view the ads and to learn more about sugar-loaded beverages visit, www.rethinkyourdrinknow.com.

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