

# “Do parents understand the sugar content in sports drinks and the risk it has on pediatric oral health?”

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## Introduction

Previous research has aimed to understand why parents provide sugary drinks to their children, and the misconceptions about the healthfulness of these drinks [1,7]. However, minimal data exists describing parent’s awareness and understanding of the association between SSB and dental caries. This study aims to evaluate parental understanding of the risk that sports drinks have on oral health. It also aims to demonstrate the importance that proper education can have on parental drink choices for their children. With proper education parents of youth can have a great influence on the amount of SSB consumed and in turn, help increase their child’s overall oral health.

## Objectives

The aims of this research were, 1) to observe the trends in sugary beverage consumption among pediatric patients at Denver Health Medical Center, 2) to determine if parent’s understood the risk of sugar sweetened beverages on oral health 3) to evaluate if parent’s only gave their children SSB if they participated in sports, and 4) to determine if more education was beneficial for parents on the risk that sugar sweetened beverages has on oral health.

## Acknowledgements

This research received no external funding. The study was considered exempt from the Western Institutional Review Board. Patient consent was obtained from legal guardians, and all patient information was removed for this study.

## Results

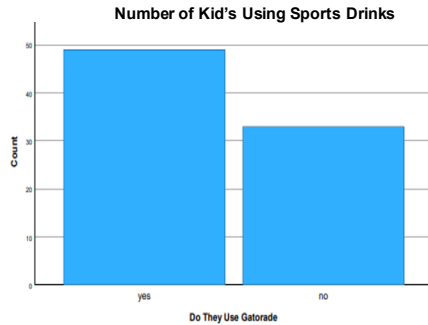


Figure 1: What are the trends in sports drink consumption?

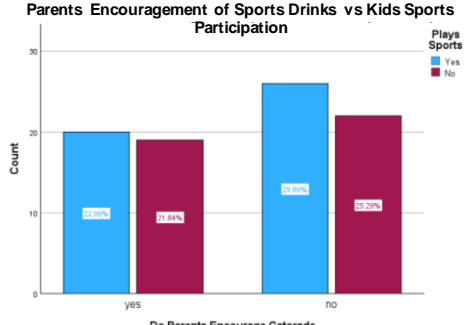


Figure 2: Are parents more likely to endorse these drinks because their kids are involved in sports?

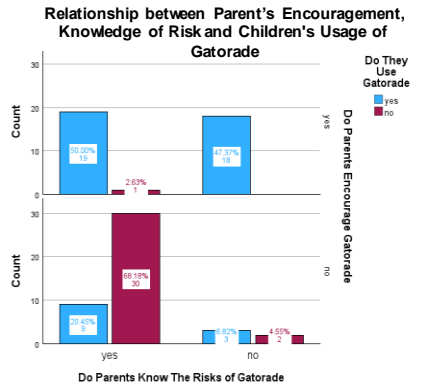


Figure 3: Do parent’s give their children SSB regardless of participation in sports

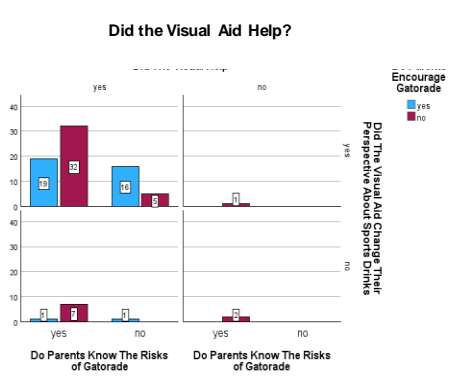


Figure 4: Is more parental education needed?

## Conclusions

Sugary drinks should not be a part of a child’s diet. They serve no health benefit and increase the risk of negative health consequences such as dental caries. Based on the results from this study, most parents at Denver Health Pediatric Dental Clinic were allowing their children to drink sports drinks. The research also showed that many parents encourage the use of sports drinks regardless of the child’s engagement in sports activity. The misuse of sports drinks may be due to parental misunderstanding of the intended use of sports drinks from media, advertising, or simply lack of education. With only 12% correctly answering how much sugar is in sports drinks, educational initiatives for parents are recommended in order to improve oral health of young athletes.

Misuse of sports drinks may be due to parents misunderstanding of the intended use, or unknowing the risks sports drinks poses on oral health. Although the data showed little statistical significance to support the results, it could be due to the relatively small sample size. Nonetheless, the results strongly suggests that more research and educational initiatives for parents and even youth sport coaches may be beneficial in improving oral health of young athletes

## References

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