**HOW MUCH SUGAR IS HIDDEN IN DRINKS MARKETED TO CHILDREN?**

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### Background

One in three UK children aged 10 to 15 are now overweight or obese. A third also have tooth decay (the commonest reason for hospital admission in UK children). Yet approximately 10% of children’s energy intake comes from sugary drinks. We therefore investigated the amount of sugars in fruit juices and juice drinks marketed to children.

### Methods

The sugar content (per 100ml and standardised 200ml portion) of 203 fruit juices, juice drinks and smoothies from seven major UK supermarkets (supermarket own and branded products) were surveyed.

“Fruit juices” were defined as, ‘100% pure juice made from the flesh of fresh fruit or whole fruit, depending on type used, with no added sugars’. “Smoothies” labelled as "fruit juice" should not include any additional ingredients. “Non pure fruit smoothies” may contain other ingredients. We included “Juice drinks” (1% to 99% juice), nectars, and “still flavoured waters”.

Only products specifically marketed towards children were included. Sports drinks, iced teas carbonated drinks, and cordials were excluded as they are not specifically marketed towards children.

### Results

Sugar content ranged from 0 -16 g/100ml. The average sugar content was 7 g/100 ml but among the 100% fruit juice category it was 10.7 g/100 ml. 117 of the 203 drinks surveyed would merit a FSA “red” traffic light label for sugars for per 200ml serving and only 63 drinks would receive a “green” traffic light label.

Large variations existed in sugar content between different types of drinks and within the same type of drinks. On average, smoothies (13 g/100 ml) contained the highest amounts and juice drinks (5.6 g/100 ml) contained the lowest.

57 of the 203 fruit juice drinks contained added sugar (sucrose); 65 contained sweeteners, and 5 contained both. Seven products contained Glucose Fructose syrup. 140 products contain no added sugars or sweeteners.

### Conclusions

Sugars content in fruit juice, juice drinks and smoothies marketed to children in the UK is high. Over a quarter of products surveyed contained the same amount or more of sugars than a 200ml glass of cola: five teaspoons of sugar.

These findings demonstrate that drinks with high sugars content should not count as one of the five a day recommendation. Manufacturers must stop adding unnecessary sugars and calories to their juices and drinks. Parents should dilute fruit juice with water, opt for unsweetened juices, and only give them during meals, portions should be limited to 150ml a day.