



## COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS



### Simple Step to Stem Childhood Obesity: Eliminate One Sugar Source

Today's younger generation may be the first in decades whose lifespan is shorter than their parents. The culprit is obesity and its accompanying health risks, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol. These and other conditions are now much more frequent among children and adolescents due to rising incidences of overweight and obesity.

How common is the problem? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than two-thirds of Americans are overweight or obese, and the prevalence among children has nearly tripled since the 1980s, leaving approximately 1.4 million young people in New York State, ages 2 to 19 years, too heavy.

That is 32 percent—essentially one in three youth.

In Putnam County the trends are similar. Despite scenic hiking trails, school sports and other recreational programs, physical activity levels are down. In the 2010 Nutrition and Physical Activity Survey conducted by the Putnam County Health Department only 12 percent of respondents reported daily exercise.

There is no quick fix solution, but if you were to make one small, relatively easy change for your family, consider these three facts:

To burn the calories in one 12-ounce soda, a typical 10-year-old needs to bike vigorously for 30 minutes.

Teenagers who drink sugar-sweetened beverages get an average of 360 calories from them daily—potentially adding more than 30 pounds a year.

Americans consume 200 to 300 more calories each day than they did 30 years ago, and more than half come from sugary beverages.

In this post-holiday season, many consider a new diet or exercise regime, but total overhaul is not necessary. Real behavior change starts with small steps that

add up. Take the challenge—substitute plain water for sugary drinks and juices, and weight improvement and better health will follow.

Don't just take my word for it. A recent study in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, one of the most respected medical journals, documented weight loss with this simple step. The year-long investigation provided easy access with home delivery of bottled water and non-caloric beverages and study participants were essentially able to eliminate all sugary drinks and juices. You can too.

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