



PUBLIC BACK CALLS TO EXTEND SUGAR TAX

Data collected by the Oral Health Foundation as part of National Smile Month shows that 61% of the United Kingdom support an expansion of the current Soft Drinks Industry Levy - also known as the sugar tax.

Milkshakes, fruit juices, smoothies and alcoholic mixers, which are exempt under the current sugar tax, all received equal backing as possible routes for an extension.

A previous report looking into some of the drinks exempt from the sugar tax found that half contain a child's entire recommended daily sugar intake, which is almost 19 g or nearly five teaspoons.

'The sugar content of drinks has fallen by 21.6%'

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation, believes the Soft Drinks Industry Levy has had a positive impact on the nation's health and supports calls to extend the sugar tax further.

Dr Carter said: "The sugar tax has been a significant success, not only for oral health, but for general health and

wellbeing too. The more sugar we can continue to cut from drinks, the healthier our population will be. It will allow more of us to be free of the diseases and conditions linked to sugar, and it will also save the NHS millions every year.

"The lack of progress by government to build on the current sugar tax proposals has been extremely disappointing. Expanding the sugar tax to include milkshakes, smoothies and fruit juices is a relatively small step but the impact it could have would be enormous."

The sugar tax was introduced two years ago and applies to drinks with more than 8 g of added sugar per 100 ml. The tax forced manufacturers to lower their sugar content or face a tax rate equivalent to 24p per litre. As a result, many of them did. So much so that the new levy brought £800 million less than it was forecast to.

Since then, the sugar content of drinks sold has fallen by 21.6% - equating to more than 30,000 tonnes of sugar a year.

"The impact that sugar has on teeth is horrific," said Dr Carter. "It is why one-in-three adults in the UK have tooth decay and it is the reason why around 35,000 children are admitted to hospital each year."

During National Smile Month, the Oral Health Foundation challenged the public to cut its added sugar intake. Advice on sugar swaps is available at www.smilemonth.org.

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