

SUPERTITLE SUGGESTION: PUBLIC HEALTH

Reducing sugary drink consumption

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Credit: Peter Dazeley / The Image Bank / Getty

To combat childhood obesity, Chile introduced in 2016 the Law of Food Labelling and Advertising. This was the first national regulation that mandated front-of-package warnings, in addition to restricting child-directed marketing and banning sales in schools of food and drinks high in added sugars, sodium or saturated fats.

Lindsey Smith Taillie, of the University of Carolina at Chapel Hill, and colleagues examine the potential impact this law has had on purchases of drinks high in sugar, sodium, saturated fats or calories. The authors analysed monthly longitudinal data on packaged drinks purchases from 2,383 households participating in the Kantar WordPanel Chile Survey from 2015 to 2017. They compared actual drinks purchases after the law was implemented to expected purchases if the policy had not been implemented, based on purchasing

history before the law came into effect. They found that the volume of unhealthy drinks purchased after the regulation was implemented decreased by 23.7% per day. The combined policies of the Chilean Law of Food Labelling and Advertising were associated with greater reductions in unhealthy drinks purchases than single policies such as taxation of sugary drinks implemented in Latin America in the past.

Although the study is observational and cannot be used to draw causal conclusions, it suggests that packaging several policies to be implemented at once may offer advantages over single, standalone policies in reducing sugary drink consumption.

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