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Beverage Consumption Among U.S. Children and Adolescents

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“Beverage Consumption
Among US Children and
Adolescents:
Full-Information and
Quasi Maximum-
Likelihood Estimation of
a Censored System”

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Analyzing data from USDA's Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals, we find that children tend to consume more soft drinks and less milk as they become older. Such shifts in beverage consumption can jeopardize a child's health, but the remedy can be as simple

as parents' taking a more active role in guiding their children's food choices. On average, for each 1-ounce reduction in milk consumption, a child consumes 4.2 ounces of soft drinks, resulting in a net gain of 31 calories and a loss of about 34 milligrams of calcium. Therefore, the changing beverage consumption among children may have contributed to the increased prevalence of overweight and obese children. Girls tend to drink less milk than boys do, which probably contributes to teenage girls' being particularly prone to calcium deficiency, which in turn has led to a series of government-sponsored campaigns to encourage girls to drink more milk. We also find that soft drink consumption relates to TV watching, with children consuming more soft drinks during weekends than weekdays.

