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## Sugar-stacked soft drinks cheaper at Christmas

Christmas-time discounts on sugary soft drinks could be leading to weight gain, with new research showing an increase in reduced-price stock during the silly season.



Susie O'Brien [Follow](#)

 @susieob  2 min read December 20, 2019 - 7:00PM

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Cheap soft drink can contain more sugar than

Discounted soft drinks are contributing significantly to the one-kilo Christmas weight gain, new data shows.

[Sugar-stacked soft drinks](#) are twice as likely to be reduced in price than healthy drinks like sparkling water and milk at this time of year.

This makes people buy more than they planned, research from Deakin University and VicHealth shows.

Around 60 per cent of soft drinks are on sale in the weeks before Christmas, compared to 30 per cent throughout the year.

Lead author Christina Zorbas from the Global Obesity Centre at Deakin University called for public health interventions beyond a tax on soft drinks to “reduce the influence of price promotions on consumer purchasing behaviour”.

Such drinks account for 37 per cent of the added sugar in the diets of Australians — the leading contributor.

VicHealth CEO Dr Sandro Demaio said aggressive price cuts and incessant marketing of unhealthy food and drinks made it challenging for parents over the holidays.

“Parents walking into a supermarket at this time of year are bombarded with promotions and advertising on sugary drinks, making it hard to say no,” Dr Demaio said.

“These promotions typically price sugary drinks so low that we buy more than we planned; that leaves us continuing to drink them long after Christmas is over,” he said.

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“Food and drink companies have been hugely successful in using Christmas to market their unhealthy products, making us think they’re an essential part of the holidays.

“Sugary drink companies have been using Santa and other Christmas imagery for over a century, exploiting our love of Christmas to increase their profit margins at the cost of our kids’ health.”





Dr Sandro Demaio said companies successfully use Christmas time to market unhealthy products.

Dr Demaio called for higher standards for how the sugary drink industry promotes its products to kids.

“Nearly a quarter of Victorian children are above a healthy weight and there’s a clear link between regular sugary drink consumption, weight gain and poor dental health,” he said.

“We know sugary drinks are hugely profitable for the food and beverage industry because they’re packed full of cheap ingredients like sugar.

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“We want supermarkets to put our kids’ health above the profits of sugary drink manufacturers and give families a break over the holidays from the bombardment of sugar,” Dr Demaio said.

His call comes as two-thirds of adults and one quarter of children are overweight or obese.

Kathryn Backholer, associate director of the Global Obesity Centre, said the December peak “was yet another example of how the junk food industry put profits before health”.

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