One of the main issues facing Australia, both today and in the future, is childhood obesity. According to NSW Health, “Good eating and exercise habits in young people are especially important as this is a period of rapid physical growth.” (NSW Health “Young People’s Health Our Future—Nutrition and Physical Activity. http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/health-public-affairs/youthhealth/nutrition.html )

This study focuses on the Canteen and student beverage choices in the course of one week. Although healthy and less healthy choices are available through the canteen, high school students are able to choose as they see appropriate.

Decisions made today will help determine health in the future.
Set-up

Students were observed for the purchases they made for the morning tea and lunch periods from Monday to Friday. Results were corroborated by canteen staff.

Temperatures during the times of the observation were between 20 and 22 degrees Celsius at each session.

There were no special events or changes in schedule that might have influenced the results.

Students were not informed at this stage about the function nor the focus of this study.

Canteen choices of drinks are as follows:

- Juice (full fruit juice—not juice drinks)
- Poppers (juice drinks)
- Mineral and flat water
- Flavoured mineral water
- Milk (plain and flavoured)
- Sodas (a variety)

“School Canteens: using ripples to create a wave of healthy eating”

An editorial about healthy canteens.

**Recorded Data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Juice</th>
<th>Popper</th>
<th>Water</th>
<th>Flavoured Water</th>
<th>Milk</th>
<th>Sodas</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>31</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>154</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>28</td>
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<td>23</td>
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<tr>
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<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>128</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>104</strong></td>
<td><strong>250</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comparison Graphs

Beverages Sold at the Canteen

Beverage Choices

Number of different beverages
Depending upon the graph or table viewed, one may make different assumptions regarding the information.

The raw data suggests that the most number of drinks were purchased on Thursday. Particularly one might note that the bottled waters in particular had increased sales. This could be related to the fact that Thursday afternoon is Sport for years 7-11 and more students may purchase bottles to take with them to sport activities.

On three of the days (Mon., Tues., Fri.) the total drinks sold were exactly the same. Wednesday’s purchases were approximately 9% higher, however Thursday’s consumption was approximately 20% higher.

If one classifies the pure juice, water and milk as “healthy choices” and the popper, flavoured water and soda as “less healthy choices, nearly 40% more students chose the “less healthy” choices.

One could argue that because the flavoured water and popper do have some juice in them (although the sugar content is particularly high) they may be also considered as a healthy choice. Another consideration could be that the flavoured milks often contain higher levels of sugar than the popper or flavoured water, that they might be classified as “less healthy” alternatives.

In this survey, the purchase of sodas exceeded other beverages by as much as 60%. The NSW DET has now banned the sale of soft drinks from school canteens.
A Future Look

Although the beverages consumed may not necessarily account for a weight gain, if an overall diet is healthy with a moderate intake of sugars and calories, the outlook for a healthy body in the future is enhanced.

Minimum dietary requirements for age groups have been devised by the Australian Department of Health. Exceeding the levels of fats and sugars in particular has been linked to weight gain. Many people are under the assumption that because something is only a drink, that the kilojoule content is not significant.

In the future, students who tend to take in excess kilojoules without appropriate exercise will potentially put on weight. Weight gain may be associated with diabetes, heart disease and other health problems.

Nutrition for teens.
Conclusions

In a future study, a program of education on healthy beverage choices may be undertaken through a poster campaign, alerting students to consequences of their actions now on their future health. Following the campaign, student choices may again be monitored to see if the campaign has made an impact on choices.

Re-doing the survey since the ban on the sales of sodas may give a different slant to the survey.

Depending upon the graph one chose to look at, one might draw different conclusions about the data. It is important to choose the type of graph that best indicates the facts one wishes to get across to the viewing audience.

NSW Health “Young People’s Health Our Future—Nutrition and Physical Activity.  
How do students respond to the canteen offerings?

**Bibliography**


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