

Press release

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Will sales fizz? One in five adults say the sugar tax won't deter them from buying sugary drinks

Ahead of the impending Soft Drinks Industry Levy on 6th April, one in five UK adults (21%) say that potentially paying a little bit extra won't bother them if they want a sugary drink.

According to survey figures* released today by YouGov and Simplyhealth, the experts behind Denplan payment plans, just over half of the nation (59%) supports the new tax, but a significant number of people would not be deterred by potential price hikes of sugary beverages. In the same survey, 20% of adults admitted they are addicted to sugar.

Nicknamed the 'sugar tax', the Soft Drinks Industry Levy is a completely new measure that comes into force on 6th April 2018. Plans for the tax were announced in the Government's 2016 budget in response to the nation's alarming levels of obesity and poor oral health.

The tax primarily targets manufacturers and importers of sugary soft drinks and encourages them to adjust their recipes and reduce the levels of sugar in their drinks, thereby avoiding the tax or paying a lower level. However, consumers could also be affected and be forced to pay more for sugary drinks if

manufacturers decide to not reformulate their recipes and pass on the tax to consumers.

Under the new levy, drinks with a sugar content over five but below eight grams per 100ml will see 18p added to the price of the drink per litre, and drinks containing over eight grams of sugar per 100ml will face an increase of 24p per litre.

“It’s encouraging to see that the majority of people support the new levy and understand the urgent need to address the alarming levels of obesity and poor oral health – particularly those of children - in the UK,” said Henry Clover, Chief Dental Officer at Simplyhealth, the experts behind Denplan payment plans. “However it’s concerning that one in five people say they would not be deterred by potential price increases of sugary drinks, suggesting that sugary beverages are seen as a staple item in some people’s daily diets. Sugary drinks are a leading cause of tooth decay and acid erosion and offer little to no nutritional value.”

Encouragingly, 53% of respondents in the survey claimed they don’t drink sugary drinks, and 17% would consider choosing less sugary and potentially less expensive options, of which 10% didn’t like the thought of paying extra and 7% who definitely don’t want to pay extra.

“It will be interesting to observe consumer buying behaviour over the next year as well as seeing how many manufacturers have adjusted their recipes,” says Henry. “Reducing access to high sugar drinks options and encouraging people to choose less sugary options is likely to have a positive effect on the nation’s oral health, particularly in children and young adults. Sugary drinks should always be seen as an occasional treat and only drunk as part of a meal. Water and milk are far more tooth-friendly options.”

The survey also revealed that one in four adults (25%) admit to struggling to understand the sugar content on food and drink packaging labels, highlighting

that many people may be unwittingly consuming much higher levels of sugar than they realise. Worryingly, amongst these, only 56% of 18-24 year olds knew that honey is a sugar, and only 41% of the same age group knew that molasses, fruit juice concentrates (44%) and maltose (50%) are also types of sugar.

“Confusion over food and drink labelling and a lack of awareness of the recommended daily limits almost certainly contribute to the nation’s high sugar consumption,” says Henry. “It’s important that manufacturers and retailers make it as easy as possible for consumers to know what they’re purchasing and are transparent with their ingredients and labelling. There is also a role for dental teams and other healthcare professionals to help patients understand the effects of a high sugar diet on their health and help them make more informed choices.”

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Notes to Editors

For more information, please contact Sara Elliott, Consumer Press & PR Officer at SaraE@denplan.co.uk or call 01962 828 194

*Online survey conducted by YouGov on behalf of Simplyhealth. Total sample size was 5,264 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 12th -19th February 2018. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

About Simplyhealth:

For 145 years we’ve been helping people to make the most of life through better everyday health. In 2017, Simplyhealth and Denplan united under one Simplyhealth brand and today we’re proud to be the UK’s leading provider of health cash plans, Denplan dental payment plans and pet health plans.

We help over three million people in the UK access the health and care products, services and support that they need, when they need them and at a price they can afford.

1m health cash plan customers
1.5m patients with a Denplan payment plan
6,500 member dentists

1,900 member vets
879,600 animals covered
11,000 corporate clients

We're proud to donate 10% of our pre-tax profits to health-related charitable activities every year, and this amounted to over £1 million in 2017. Our Simplyhealth Great Run Series partnership raised an additional £42.6 million for charity.

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