

# Food stamp soda ban can save 141,000 children from obesity

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Several studies have shown that poor families on food stamps tend to have much higher rates of obesity and diabetes than the rest of the population.

Banning soda and other sugary drinks from food stamps would lead to significant drops in obesity and diabetes rates among the poor, according to a new study.

It would prevent at least 141,000 kids from getting fat and another 240,000 adults from developing Type 2 diabetes, the kind that usually stems from obesity, according to Stanford University medical researchers in a study published in the June issue of the [academic journal Health Affairs](#).

"It's as big an impact as I've seen," said lead researcher Sanjay Basu, an assistant professor of medicine at the Stanford Prevention Research Center.

Basu started the study to explore criticism that the federal food stamp program, officially called Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP), subsidizes the purchase of [sugary drinks that offer no nutritional value](#).

## 1 in 5 rely on food stamps here

Over the years, several studies have shown that poor families on food stamps tend to have [much higher rates of obesity](#) and diabetes than the rest of the population.

"There are complaints that (taxpayers) are getting charged twice, once for the SNAP program and then again for the Medicaid and Medicare costs when people get diseases," Basu said.



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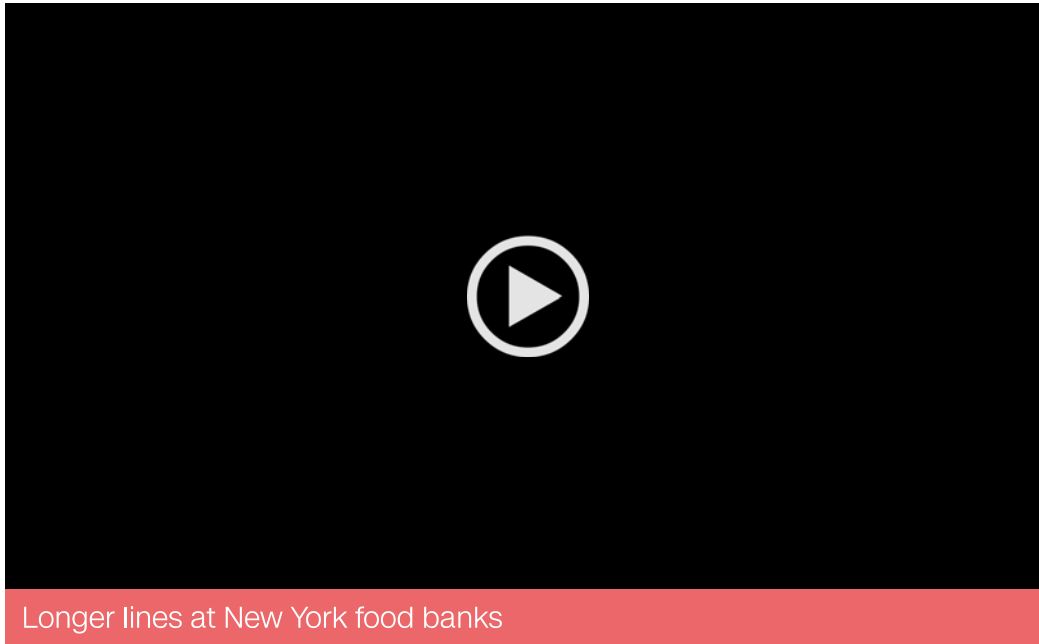


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Overall, obesity rates among [food stamps users](#) would go down by 2.4% over 10 years, according to the study. That might not seem like much for the 46.1 million people who depend on the safety-net program.

However, in the world of health policy, that's a lot, said Basu.

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Christopher Gindlesperger, spokesman for the American Beverage Association said "obesity is a complex health condition." He called the obesity reduction rates in the study "insignificant."

"Targeting struggling families who rely on SNAP's vital safety net will not make America healthier or reduce government spending," Gindlesperger said.

Efforts to ban sugary drinks from food stamps haven't made much progress. In 2011, New York City's former Mayor Michael Bloomberg tried to get permission to ban food stamp purchases of soda in that city. The U.S. Department of Agriculture told him no, calling the effort "too large and complex."

Last year, Bloomberg and 17 other mayors wrote to Congress last year, asking them to ban sugary drinks from food stamps.

Last year, Rep. Phil Roe, a Tennessee Republican and doctor, proposed new limits on food stamps that would ban their use for junk food but that measure hasn't been considered by a committee.

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