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# Learning Activity: Sugar in Sports Drinks

**Age Group:** Students in 1st through 12th grades (and parents will enjoy this activity too!)

## Learning Outcomes

- Students will recognize the amount of sugar that is found in a typical size of a sports drink.
- Students will have information that helps them choose better beverages (such as tap water, bottled water, sparkling water or milk).

## Supplies Needed

- A 10-ounce plastic cup that is clear (allowing people to see what's inside)\*
- A container of granulated sugar
- A teaspoon (measuring exactly 1 teaspoon)
- A 20-ounce Gatorade (Lemon-Lime, Strawberry-Watermelon, or any other flavor)

## Directions

1. Place the plastic cup, container of sugar, and teaspoon on a table that is about waist-high. Position this table between you and the students in the class so that everything is easy to see.
2. Ask the students what they think of when they see a bottle of Gatorade. (*Students are likely to respond with "athletes" or similar answers.*) Then ask them: "Do we think of drinks for athletes as being healthy or not healthy?" Probe for their responses.
3. Ask a student to volunteer to come up to the head of the room where you are. Then ask the student to read the ingredients label and inform the class how much added sugar is in the Gatorade (answer: it will probably be 34 or 35 grams).
4. Tell the class: "If we know that 4 grams of sugar is roughly the same as 1 teaspoon of sugar, then how many teaspoons of sugar are in 34 grams of sugar?" Wait for someone to give the correct answer, which is 8.5 teaspoons. (**Note:** *If you are doing this activity for students in the earlier grades, you will need to tell them the answer.*)
5. Instruct the student-volunteer to begin scooping sugar from the container and pour it into the plastic cup until it reaches 8.5 teaspoons of sugar. Ask the class to count with you as you help guide the student-volunteer.
6. Once all of the sugar has been poured into the cup, ask the class for their reactions:
  - Are you surprised that a sports drink that is popular with athletes has this much sugar?
  - Do you think all of the athletes who drink Gatorade know how much sugar it contains?
  - Do you think TV commercials for Gatorade tell the people watching how much sugar is in their drink? Why or why not?

\* Try to find a plastic cup that is no larger than 10 ounces. Avoid using a larger-sized cup. If you need to substitute a different size, consider using an 8-ounce plastic cup.