



Nutrition Policy Institute Urges USDA to Make Water “First for Thirst”

University of California Experts Say Adding Water to MyPlate Graphic Could Help Prevent Childhood Obesity

Bethesda, MD (March 24, 2015) – The U.S. government should promote plain drinking water as the beverage of choice, according to comments submitted today by the University of California’s Nutrition Policy Institute (NPI) at a public meeting for oral testimony on the Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee. The institute also urged the U.S. Department of Agriculture to add a symbol for water to its MyPlate graphic.

NPI experts said the government should employ strong language encouraging consumption of plain drinking water as a strategy in the fight against childhood obesity. Studies have established that Americans’ single largest source of added sugars is sugar-sweetened beverages, that sugar-sweetened beverages are among the top sources of calories for U.S. children and teens, and that there are income and racial disparities in sugar-sweetened beverage consumption.

“It is clear from the evidence that a major contributor to obesity is sugary drinks,” said NPI Director Lorrene Ritchie. “And the healthiest alternative to sugary drinks is plain water.”

NPI noted that the Advisory Committee’s 2015 scientific report said, “Strategies are needed to encourage the U.S. population to drink water when they are thirsty.” MyPlate – the infographic used by USDA to portray the recommendations in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans – is the “ideal platform” from which to encourage water consumption, according to NPI. In its comments, the institute said, “the addition of a water symbol will enable MyPlate to promote water consumption along with its other strong messages about a healthy diet.”

Ritchie said NPI is encouraging the public to join them in sending a message to the government. “Tell Washington to make water first for thirst and ask the USDA to reinforce it with an icon for water on MyPlate,” she said.

NPI developed a “Take Action!” page on its website with easy-to-follow guidelines for submitting comments on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The “Take Action!” web page is located at <http://npi.ucanr.edu/water/>.

The Nutrition Policy Institute was created in 2014 by UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, the division of the University of California system charged with sharing research-based information with the public about healthy communities, nutrition, agricultural production and environmental stewardship. The institute seeks to improve eating habits and reduce obesity, hunger and chronic disease risk in California children and their families and beyond. Visit NPI online at <http://npi.ucanr.edu/>.