



**Embargo:** 1.00 am, Monday, 10 October 2016

## **Over one-third of 11-16 year olds drink sugar sweetened drinks at least once a day**

**Young people, males and those from lower socio-economic groups are most frequent consumers of sugar-sweetened drinks (SSDs) across island of Ireland**

An all-island conference to be hosted by the Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH) will hear tomorrow, World Obesity Day (Tuesday, 11 October 2016), that 34% of 11-16 year olds in Northern Ireland are drinking sugar sweetened drinks (SSDs) daily.

These data will be contained in a presentation, *A spoonful of sugar* which will be presented by IPH's Drs Joanna Purdy and Noelle Cotter at IPH's fifth annual Open Conference. This year's conference will be held in Belfast's Titanic Quarter and will be opened by the Northern Ireland Minister for Health, Michelle O'Neill MLA and the keynote address will be given by Dr Fiona Sim, Chair of the Royal Society of Public Health on "*The role of the arts and creativity in public health*".

Drs Joanna Purdy and Noelle Cotter will indicate that the 2014-2015 Health Survey Northern Ireland reveals some important evidence about the consumption of sugar sweetened drinks in Northern Ireland:

- One third of 11-16 year olds consume SSDs at least once a day
- Three in ten adults consume SSDs most days of the week or daily
- Half of all 16-24 year olds consume SSDs most days of the week or more often
- Boys and men of all ages consume a greater volume of SSDs at a greater frequency than girls and women

Drs Purdy and Cotter will indicate that, "in the context of World Obesity Day's focus on childhood obesity, one in four children across the island of Ireland are overweight or obese."

Northern Ireland data – which mirrors the figures for the Republic of Ireland – reveals that:

- 60% of adults age 16 and over are overweight or obese (35% overweight and 25% obese);
- While 21% of children are overweight and 7% obese.

"World Health Organization guidelines state that free sugars should comprise less than 10% of our daily energy intake with reductions below 5% (approximately 6 teaspoons) per day would provide additional health benefits. Consuming one 330 millilitre can of SSD could take a child over their recommended daily sugar intake," Drs Purdy and Cotter will conclude.

## **Notes to Editors**

### ***Institute of Public Health in Ireland (IPH)***

The Institute of Public Health in Ireland is an all-island body which supports cooperation on public health North and South to promote collective action for sustained improvements in health with a particular focus on addressing health inequalities.

### ***All-Island Open Conference***

IPH's annual Open Conference provides a platform to highlight how effective public health interventions can make significant positive difference to the lives of individuals and to the type of society we live in. It provides an important all-island forum to showcase public health research and opportunities for key players including practitioners, policy makers and the community and voluntary sector to exchange ideas that can help create a healthier population."

Nineteen papers will be presented at today's Open Conference – which will focus on the theme "*Breaking down boundaries – innovation, participation and creativity in public health*" – on a range of public health issues such as:

- Tackling poverty and inequality across the life cycle – innovative practices and interventions in the context of the delivery of programmes or services relevant to public health.
- Connecting evidence with public health policy – novel approaches with an emphasis on engagement, participation and multidisciplinary collaboration.
- How healthy are we? – research, policy and the creative arts as tools for advancing the public's health.

### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:**

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