



Press Release from the Natural Source Waters Association

For immediate release

People swapping from natural source waters to diet fizzy drinks

Concerns have been raised by health experts after 2019 saw a decline in natural source water sales year on year, with the category losing out to diet fizzy drinks. Natural source waters are the healthiest choice on the shelf when it comes to ways to quench your thirst, as they contain no sugar, calories or additives, so seeing people switch to other drinks, even diet soft drinks, is worrying, say diet and dental experts.

The decline in sales of natural source waters over the year, which can largely be put down to the key summer sales period being substantially cooler and wetter than the previous year¹, appears to have come at the same time as an increase in sales of fizzy drinks and energy drinks². Diet fizzy drinks benefited most, with diet colas alone taking 6.5 million litres of sales from the natural source water category³.

Importantly, tap water consumption at home remains the same year on year⁴. Data did however show people moving back into hot drinks such as tea (+3%) and coffee (+4%) in 2019 compared with 2018⁵, which would be expected with cooler summer weather.

Water is the healthiest way to hydrate as it contains no sugar or additives, so this switch in sales has raised concerns among diet and dental specialists alike. Even though the Soft Drinks Levy has seen a reduction in sugar in fizzy drinks and much of the switch has been to diet fizzy drinks, these are not as healthy as water. As a result, this is likely to have had an adverse impact on our health at a time of increasing levels nationally of obesity, diabetes and tooth disease.

Johanna Hignett, BDA member, commented that 'Water is one of the healthiest ways to hydrate. With no added sugars, it is calorie free and also has no added colours, sweeteners or acids. When faced with a vast selection in a shop or café, water is one of the best choices. It is concerning to see that customers seem to be choosing other options more often.'

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the Oral Health Foundation said, "They may not contain sugar but artificially-sweetened or 'diet' fizzy drinks can still be harmful to oral health and general wellbeing. Diet fizzy drinks are highly acidic and can dissolve the enamel on the teeth. This risk is higher when having them between meals. Plain still water is the best 'tooth-friendly' way of quenching thirst, without putting health at risk."

Natural source waters are not only the healthiest way to hydrate, but also have the lowest environmental impact of any drink on the shelf as they contain no agricultural or industrial additives such as sugars, flavourings or sweeteners, so this switch will also have resulted in an increase in greenhouse gases produced from the nation's drinks choice.

¹ 40% fewer hours of sunshine in June and July according to the Met Office.

² Kantar Worldpanel, Total Soft Drinks: Switching: Spend (£000s), 12 w/e 26 Jan 2020 vs. YA

³ Kantar, 52 w/e 01 Dec 19, Universe Soft Drinks.

⁴ Kantar Worldpanel Usage, 52 w/e August 19 vs. YA, % change.

⁵ Kantar Worldpanel Usage, 52 w/e August 19 vs. YA, % change.



Notes for editors:

1. The Natural Source Waters Association, formerly the Natural Hydration Council, represents producers of natural source waters. Membership includes the majority of natural source water producers in the UK as well as leading importers.
2. Natural source waters all come from protected underground sources and must be safe to drink from source as they cannot be chemically treated, unlike tap water which comes from a variety of sources, such as reservoirs and rivers, and undergoes an industrial process to make it safe to drink.
3. Members of the Natural Source Waters Association are instrumental in protecting 350,000 acres of land in the United Kingdom, the equivalent of the Peak District National Park.
4. For more information go to www.naturalsourcewaters.org.uk or call 0208 996 5115.