

What is in Your Beverage Choice?

Have you ever considered what is in your beverage choice? With the variety of options out there it can be difficult to know if you are making the healthiest choice. Some drinks are packed with calories and sugar and offer little to no nutritional value such as vitamins and minerals. Other drinks do contain nutrients, but may also be packed with high calories and sugars. These drinks can hinder your weight loss efforts or pack on pounds when you are trying to maintain your weight. The following information can help you make healthier choices when quenching your thirst.



Water

Did you know your body is composed of 60% water? Through normal activities such as breathing and using the restroom, you lose some of that water every day. It is important to replace it so your body can function at its best. There are a variety of reasons why water should be your first choice when you are thirsty. It contains zero calories and can be filling, which could help you not to overeat and snack between meals. Therefore water is the best option when you need to satisfy your thirst and reduce calorie intake for weight loss. It is also easy on your wallet and has little cost compared to other beverages on the market. Water can be easy to carry by using a reusable water bottle you can refill throughout the day.

Tips to help drink more water:

- Have a glass with each meal and snack.
- Keep a bottle with you that you can refill throughout the day.
- Add fruit, such as lemon to the water and let it sit in the refrigerator for a couple hours to give it an extra kick of flavor.

- Set alerts on your phone as reminders to drink a glass of water every couple hours.
- Think about the cost savings when choosing water to drink when going out to eat.

Milk

There are a variety of choices when it comes to milk. When talking about cow's milk, each type offers the same nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, and potassium, but the calorie amount varies. For a healthy and nutritious diet, 1% and skim milk are recommended since they have fewer calories coming from fat. See the difference in calorie amounts in the chart below.

If you are lactose intolerant, where you may have gas, bloating, or diarrhea after consuming milk and milk products, there are other options for you to try. Try lactose-free milk, soy milk, almond milk, or rice milk. Keep in mind that the nutrients in cow's milk and the variety of choices for those who are lactose intolerant may vary.

Compare the Calories*

Each calorie amount is based off 1 cup (8 ounces).

Beverage	Calories	Total Sugar (g)
Water	0	0
Whole Milk	149	13
2% Milk	122	12
1% Milk	102	13
Skim Milk	83	12
Apple Juice	114	24
Orange Juice	112	21
Soft Drink, Cola	91	22**
Coffee/Tea, Black or unsweetened	2	0
Sports Drink	65	13**

*Information taken from <https://www.supertracker.usda.gov/foodapedia.aspx>

**These contain added sugars



Juice

Choose juice that is labeled 100 % fruit juice, because it contains natural sugar, not added sugar. Although the sugar is natural, it is suggested to limit your serving size

to 4-6 ounces a day due to the high calorie content.

Be careful of beverages labeled as “fruit drink,” “fruit beverage,” or “fruit cocktail,” as these beverages do not contain 100% fruit juice and therefore contain little to no nutritional value. They also have added sugars which will affect your waistline. It is recommended to eat your fruit rather than drink it. When eating the fruit itself, you are getting the benefit of fiber, which the juice is missing. So grab that apple or orange and take a healthy bite.

Soft Drinks

Here is a drink that is not giving you any nutritional value. Soda pop is high in calories due to the added sugars. Additionally, you are obtaining little to no vitamins or minerals with this beverage choice.

Take a look at the chart on the front page. When you have a soft drink, do you limit yourself to 8 ounces? Remember that if you drink more than 8 ounces, you are getting more than 91 calories. Also, look at the amount of added sugar, 22 grams in only 8 ounces! These extra calories and sugars are may affect your weight and not to mention the negative effects that sugar can have on your teeth.

Coffee / Tea

Generally, coffee and tea are good beverage choices, although caffeinated drinks should be limited to no more than 3-4, 8 ounce cups a day. Remember, decaffeinated choices are also available. Keep in mind, it is easy to add calories from added sugars and fat to these pick-me-ups by ordering specialty drinks. Do you add sugar or creamer to your coffee and tea? How about that whipped cream that was added to the top? These specialty coffees and teas can be loaded with a variety of flavored syrups and toppings. It is easy to forget that these added ingredients also are high in calories. Making small changes can make a big impact in the amount of calories in your drink. Try adding to your coffee and tea, half the amount of



sugar that you normally do, or consider using 1% or skim milk instead of the flavored creamer.

Sports Drinks

This beverage choice contains calories, a small amount of nutrients, and sugars. They can replenish some nutrients, such as sodium and potassium, which you may need during or after a long workout. However, most of the time you can replenish these nutrients through food, rather than a sports drink. Remember, it is important to look at the total amount you are drinking to know the right amount of calories and sugar you are consuming. Instead of having a sports drink after you worked hard to burn calories while exercising, grab water to quench your thirst and replenish your fluids.

Summary

With so many beverage choices out there, it is tempting to choose one that is high in calories and sugar. But consider this, most people who choose high calorie drinks do not balance out their calories by eating lower calorie foods. These beverages may be a contributor to the weight gain we see in our population. Also, the added sugar to these beverages may not only pack on the pounds, but is harmful to your teeth. Try to choose water most often. Remember that water works best to give you the fluids you need while quenching your thirst and it also contains zero calories. There will be times when you want something other than water, and this can be included in a healthy diet. Always remember the importance of moderation and portion control. Limit the amount you drink of sugar sweetened beverages, such as soda pop or sports drinks. Remember, the goal is to get the fluids you need each day without adding in sugars and calories to your beverage choice.

Need a Dietitian?

Registered Dietitians are here to help you with your nutrition questions. To make an appointment call 412.692.4497 (Oakland location) or 412.623.2421 (Shadyside location).