



Information Sheet #9: The Facts about Sugar-Sweetened Drinks¹⁶

Why limit sugar-sweetened drinks?

How about the following to start:

- For many people, drinks that contain lots of sugar—pop, sports drinks and fruit beverages—replace more nutritious options, like milk or pure fruit juices. This means less calcium and other nutrients in their diets.
- Sugar-sweetened drinks are typically high in calories and can lead to weight gain.
- Many also contain caffeine and can cause nervousness, crankiness or problems sleeping. Children are especially sensitive to caffeine's effects.
- Sugary drinks can cause tooth decay, leading to cavities or enamel break-down.
- Drinking and eating foods high in sugar, fat and/or salt can increase the risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, or other chronic diseases such as stroke, cancer, or hypertension.

What about artificial sweeteners?

- Health Canada has approved their use in small amounts for school-age children. But experts say it's best to minimize their use so that children don't get used to sweet-tasting, non-nutritious foods or drinks.
- Diet pop is not a healthier option for children than regular pop. While diet pop doesn't contain cavity-causing sugar, it's acidic and can eventually erode tooth enamel.

What about sports and energy drinks?

- Sports drinks are generally unnecessary. Only people who are training hard for 90 minutes or longer at a time benefit from them.
- And those energy drinks being heavily promoted just now? They are just "super" pops, with even more caffeine, sugar, and salt, than the regular kind.

How Much Sugar?¹⁷

DRINK	SERVING SIZE	SUGAR CONTENT
Vegetable Cocktail Juice	355 ml	1.7 tsp
1% Milk	250 ml	3 tsp
Chocolate Milk	250 ml	5 tsp
Unflavoured Soy Beverage	250 ml	1 tsp
Flavoured Soy Beverage	250 ml	6 tsp
100% Fruit Juice (unsweetened)	250 ml	7 tsp
Fruit Drink, Beverage, Cocktail, Punch	250 ml	7.5 tsp
Sports Drink	591 ml	13 tsp
Pop, Ice Tea, Energy Drink	355 ml	10 tsp
Water	Any amount	0 tsp

¹⁶ ActNow BC. How Sweet It Is! What Schools Need to Know about Sugar and Artificial Sweeteners; North West Territories, Drop the Pop Challenge; Yukon Territories, Drop the Pop Challenge.

Nutrition experts recommend that children consume only 10% of their daily calories from added sugar. For younger children, that can mean as little as ten teaspoons' worth a day. That doesn't allow for many sugary beverages.

Water is ALWAYS the best choice because it...

- Keeps your body temperature stable
- Flushes wastes from your body
- Keeps all bodily functions working well
- Helps digest food
- Moisturizes your skin
- Lubricates your brain

What about flavoured water?

Treat flavoured, sparkling waters with caution as they tend to be acidic and potentially damaging to tooth enamel. They are not simply water with flavouring as their name suggests.

If not flavoured water, then...

- Milk (plain or flavoured)
 - Milk contains nutrients, like calcium and Vitamin A and D, which support growth and development.
 - Flavoured milk is just as nutritious as plain milk (but it does contain more sugar).
 - Smoothies are a healthy and tasty way to enjoy milk.
 - Fortified soy drinks are also good substitutes for people who are allergic to milk or lactose intolerant.
- 100% Fruit Juice (unsweetened) in limited amounts
 - Check labels to ensure that a fruit juice is 100% fruit juice with no added sugar.
 - Children under two years old do not need juice at all.
 - Older children and adults should limit juice to one serving per day (125ml or ½ cup).
 - Why not add a splash of juice (1 or 2 tbsp) to your water bottle for flavour.
 - Substitute juice with whole fruit as it has less sugar per weight than juice and contains fibre.

Decreasing potential threats to teeth

- Drink through a straw with the straw held well back in the mouth. This helps keep the liquid out of contact with the teeth.
- Do not hold the drink in the mouth, or swish throughout the mouth.
- Each sip from a sugary or acidic drink creates an environment in the mouth that favours acid production and enamel erosion. Try to avoid frequent sipping.