



Surprisingly sugary drinks can sabotage diet plans

Do you know what your children will be drinking this summer? The human "sweet tooth" has never been more obvious than in today's choice of beverages. Many are so high in sugar that it is easy to crank up sugar and calorie intake along with meeting summer water needs.

Children are especially susceptible to this tendency.

Question: Are there good ways to stay hydrated without high-sugar or artificially sweetened beverages?

Answer: Yes, but people need about a liter of water for every 1,000 calories their body burns. Most people get up to a liter of water in their food each day, assuming their diet incorporates a variety of foods, including fruits and vegetables.

Diets packed with snacks such as cookies, cakes, candy, chips, popcorn and pretzels contain a lot less water. Snack foods contain only 1 to 15 percent water, whereas a piece of fruit is more than 80 percent water. Even potatoes in the form of french fries are about 40 percent water. A snack vegetable, such as a carrot, is more than 85 percent water.

Q: Which beverages are best for meeting water needs?

A: Certainly, pure water is a great drink. It is "everything-free" -- no calories, no sugar, no fat, etc. Stocking your refrigerator with icy cold portable bottles of water is a great way to provide the young with a healthy and handy water supply. Lucky we live Hawaii, where water straight from the faucet is ranked among the purest and best in the world.

An unsweetened-water-drinking habit is especially valuable for older people. With declining calorie needs, they don't need sugar drinks.

Q: How much sugar is reasonable in beverages?

A: The USDA's Food Guide Pyramid recommends a maximum 6 teaspoons of added sugar a day for people eating 1,600 calories daily --up to 18 teaspoons for 2,800 calories. For food-label readers, that's about 25 to 75 grams of sugar.

Fruit juice contains important nutrients such as vitamin C and A, folic acid and potassium. But even though pure fruit juices do not have added sugars, they are naturally high in sugar and don't

contain the fiber that whole fruits do. Many children drink too much fruit juice, adding excess sugar and calories and replacing foods needed to provide protein, essential fatty acids and other vitamins and minerals not commonly found in fruits.

Q: How much sugar is contained in typical beverages?

A: Here are examples for 12 fluid ounces of common drinks: soda, 9 teaspoons; pure fruit juice, 9 teaspoons; fruit drink (ade), 12 teaspoons; chocolate milk, 9 teaspoons; sports drinks, 5 to 7 teaspoons.

Most of the new-age "energy drinks" are loaded with added sugar -- about a teaspoon per fluid ounce. These drinks make soda look like a reduced-sugar energy drink. In addition to the sugar, energy drinks often include caffeine-containing ingredients or herbal "uppers."

During these hot days of summer, get creative. Stock your freezer with bite-size chunks of watermelon, cantaloupe, papaya and mango. Try pitchers of icy ginger tea and keep cold water on hand.

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