

CHOOSING HEALTHY DRINKS



by the Harvard School of Public Health, Department of Nutrition

Water is best to quench your thirst. Skip the sugary drinks, and go easy on the milk and juice.

There are many options for what to drink, but without a doubt, water is the best choice: It's calorie-free, and it's as easy to find as the nearest tap.

Drinks that are loaded with sugar are the worst choice: They provide lots of calories and virtually no other nutrients. Drinking them routinely can lead to weight gain and increase the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Other drinks have pros and cons, but in moderation, can fit into a healthy diet:

Coffee and tea: These are calorie-free, as long as you don't load up on the sugar and cream. They are safe for most people and may even have some health benefits.

Artificially sweetened drinks: These have no calories—a plus—but their long-term effects on weight and health are unknown, so it's best to limit them, if you drink them at all.

100% fruit juice: Fruit juice has vitamins, but it is high in calories, so stick to no more than a small glass (four to six ounces) a day.

Milk: Milk is also high in calories, so there's no need to drink more than a glass or two of low fat or skim milk a day, and less is fine, if you get your calcium from other sources.

Alcohol: Alcohol is both a tonic and a poison, and the difference lies in the dose and the person drinking it; moderation is key.

To learn more about HEALTHIER DRINKS and The Healthy Eating Pyramid, explore "The Nutrition Source" online at: www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/healthy-drinks/focus.html

SEE REVERSE FOR 5 QUICK TIPS

5 QUICK TIPS

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▶ **Quit the sugar habit.**

The average can of sugar-sweetened soda or fruit punch provides about 150 calories. If you were to drink just one can of a sugar-sweetened soft drink every day, and not cut back on calories elsewhere, you could gain up to 15 pounds in a year. Cutting back on sugary drinks may help control your weight and may lower your risk of type 2 diabetes.

▶ **Go calorie-free naturally.**

"Diet" drinks with artificial sweeteners may condition our taste buds to crave super-sweet foods. Plain old water is the best calorie-free beverage—but if it's just too plain, try adding a squeeze of lemon or lime or a splash of 100% fruit juice. Plain coffee and tea are also healthy calorie-free choices, in moderation.

▶ **If you don't drink alcohol, there's no need to start.**

If you are of legal age, moderate alcohol consumption lowers the risk of heart disease and diabetes; it also slightly increases the risk of breast and colon cancer. For some people—especially pregnant women, people recovering from alcohol addiction, people with liver disease, and people taking one or more medications that interact with alcohol—the risks of drinking clearly outweigh the benefits.

▶ **Save sports drinks for athletes.**

Sports beverages are designed to give athletes carbs, electrolytes, and fluid during high-intensity workouts that last an hour or more. For sedentary folks, they're just another source of sugary calories.

▶ **Pull the plug on energy drinks.**

These pricey concoctions have as much sugar as soft drinks, enough caffeine to raise your blood pressure, and an unpronounceable list of herbs and additives whose long-term health effects are unknown. No one needs them.