



Get the Facts

Learn About Sugary Drinks and Healthier Options

What are sugary drinks?

Sugary drinks, also known as sugar-sweetened beverages, are any non-alcoholic drinks with added sugar. This includes soft drinks (soda or pop); sports and energy drinks; flavored milks or milk alternatives; fruit drinks, punches, or ades; sweetened tea and coffee drinks; and any other beverages to which sugar has been added.

What is added sugar?

Added sugars include any kind of sugar or sweetener that is *added* to food or beverages during processing or preparation. Examples include adding sugar to pop during processing or putting sugar in your coffee. Added sugars do not include naturally-occurring sugars that are found *naturally* in foods like fruit and milk.

Why the focus on sugary drinks?

Sugary drinks are major contributors to rising obesity rates. Each day, Americans consume about 300 more calories than their body needs, and almost half of these 'extra' calories come from sugary drinks. Children and youth are consuming more too, with sugary drinks being the largest source of added sugars in their diet.

Why not focus on candy, cake, cookies, ice cream, and/or other junk food with added sugars?

These foods are still widely considered *treats* for special occasions. By contrast, sugary drinks are many people's daily default beverage. Because sugary drinks have zero nutritional value but lots of calories, it makes sense to limit them in one's diet.

Why are we consuming so many sugary drinks?

Sugary drinks are everywhere and people have easy access to them at home, school, work, and retail food outlets. Plus, prices have decreased and portion sizes have increased – not to mention the increased marketing and promotion of sugary drinks, especially to children and communities of color.

Is there a recommended daily limit of added sugar?

You don't need any added sugars in your diet, but there is a recommended daily limit, made available by the American Heart Association. See below for how much we should limit our intake to:

	Recommended Daily Limit
Children under 2 years	No added sugars
Children ages 2 – 18 years	Less than 24 grams (or 6 teaspoons)
Adult women	24 grams (or 6 teaspoons)
Adult men	36 grams (or 9 teaspoons)

Note: Approximately 4 grams of sugar = 1 teaspoon of sugar

Specifically, is there a recommended limit for sugary drinks consumption?

To keep kids and adults healthy, the American Heart Association advises that children under the age of two years should not consume foods or beverages with added sugars, including sugary drinks. Children and teens should limit their intake of sugary drinks to no more than eight ounces *weekly*, while adults should limit their intake to no more than 36 ounces *weekly*.

How much sugar is in sugary drinks?

Think about these numbers...

- The average energy drink has about 27 grams of sugar
- The average Vitamin Water has about 33 grams of sugar
- A 20 ounce bottle of Gatorade has 34 grams of sugar
- A 10 ounce bottle of children's Zoo Juice has 40 grams of sugar
- A 20 ounce bottle of Coca Cola has 65 grams of sugar
- A 20 ounce bottle of Tahitian Treat Fruit Punch has 80 grams of sugar

Just one drink can put you over the daily limit for added sugar. This doesn't even include sugar you consume through other foods and drinks. You wouldn't eat this much sugar. Why would you drink it?

What about sports drinks? Aren't they helpful when being active?

Advertising leads many of us to believe that drinks like Gatorade and Powerade are necessary, especially while being active. The truth: water and a nutritious meal is all you need to stay healthy and safe during exercise.

What about 100% juice? That's healthy, right?

100% juice is more nutritious than sugar-sweetened fruit drinks, but it's high in calories from natural sugars found in fruit. Because of this, it's best to stick to a small glass, about ½ a cup. Also try diluting 100% juice with water or seltzer to cut down on sugar and calories. If you're in the mood for fruit, enjoy a whole piece of fruit, which has the added benefit of fiber!

What about diet drinks?

Just because something is "sugar-free" or made with artificial sweeteners doesn't mean it's healthy. Artificially-sweetened diet drinks are low in calories but have little to no nutritional value. Many diet drinks can also have a sweeter taste than regular sugary drinks, causing your body to crave something sweet more. Because of this, the recommendation is to consume them in moderation.

What are some healthier beverage options?

Beverages that are both refreshing and healthy include unsweetened coffee/tea, low-fat milk (or other milk alternatives like almond milk), naturally-flavored sparkling water, 100% fruit or vegetable juice in small portions, and of course, water.

What about drinks like Vitamin Water? Are they good choices?

Beware of drinks that say they're packed with vitamins, antioxidants or other healthful ingredients – they are often loaded with sugar. Get into the habit of reading nutrition labels and choose drinks with limited calories and sugar.

Is Minneapolis tap water safe?

Minneapolis tap water is clean, safe, great tasting, costs a lot less than bottled drinks, and is healthy for the environment too (less waste from bottled water).

Aren't sugary drinks okay as long as people manage their calories and exercise?

Sugary drinks have a lot of *empty* calories and liquid calories from sugary drinks won't fill you up like the calories in solid food. People who add calories to their diet through sugary drinks usually don't decrease the number of calories they eat from other sources; instead, they end up consuming more total calories.

In addition, exercise is important for good health, but too many calories are really responsible for weight gain. If you were to drink just one can of a sugary drink a day and not cut back on calories elsewhere, you could gain up to 5 pounds in a year! Also, the typical adult would have to walk *very fast* for 30 minutes to burn 150 calories from a 12 ounce soda, but very few people do this amount of exercise regularly.

I'm not overweight. Why do I need to worry about what I drink?

Good nutrition is for everyone, not just for people who are overweight. Sugary drinks can lead to increased visceral fat, a fat that builds up in and around organs in your body. This can lead to diabetes, heart disease, or a fatty liver. In addition, extra calories from sugary drinks make it harder for the average person to maintain a healthy weight, increasing the risk of becoming overweight over time.

What are the long-term health effects of drinking too many sugary drinks?

Frequent consumption is associated with weight gain and obesity; developing other chronic diseases such as Type 2 Diabetes and heart disease; fragile bones and other bone diseases like osteoporosis; and tooth decay and cavities.

What are the benefits of decreasing sugary drinks consumption?

A reduction in sugary drink consumption is associated with weight loss and a decline in related chronic diseases such as diabetes, and significant cost savings.

Why should anyone decide what I can eat or drink?

You can eat and drink what you like – we just want you to have all of the facts to help make an informed decision. The beverage industry spends billions of dollars marketing products to children and adults. You deserve to know that these heavily-advertised beverages are the single largest driver of the obesity epidemic, and that there are tasty, healthier alternatives.