

Make Better Beverage Choices

What you drink each day is as important as what you eat and physical activity. Many beverages contain added sugar and offer little or no nutrients while others may provide too much fat and calories. Below are some tips to stay hydrated and to make healthier drink choices. These suggestions come from Rutgers Cooperative Extension.

1. Choose water over other beverages. It is cheap and a better choice. If you don't like the taste add some lemon or a little bit of juice to improve the taste. And
2. Limit the amount of beverages you consume with added sugar. Drink less sodas, energy drinks or sports drinks. Also limit the drinks with added sugar such sweet tea or lemonade.
3. Hydration is one of the most important parts of healthy physical activity. Make sure you are drinking the right amount of fluids before, during and after physical activity is essential to allowing your body to perform properly. A good rule of thumb is to aim to drinking half of your body weight in ounces daily. For example if you weigh 100 pounds, a person needs 50 ounces of water.
4. Drinking water saves money. Water is a thrifty beverage option and you can save money by drinking enough water from the tap at home or when eating out.
5. Drink water with and between your meals to help you manage your calories. Adults and children drink about 400 calories a day so drinking water can help you manage those calories.
6. Be mindful of your beverages and the calories. Enjoy alternative beverages when water just won' do. Remember check the serving size and the number of servings in the can, bottle or container to stay within your calorie needs. Select smaller cans, cups and glasses instead of large or supersized options.
7. Both exercise and warm weather can increase your body temperature. Your body cools itself by sweating but it can become harder to stay cool during humid weather because moisture doesn't evaporate as quickly from your skin. Your heart rate rises as your body works harder to remain cool. Drinking water, rather than pouring it over your head, is the only way to rehydrate and cool your body from the inside out.
8. You may lose a few pounds of water weight through sweating. Try to weigh yourself before and after each workout, and replace each pound of weight loss with 3 cups of water. Stay hydrated by sipping small amounts of weather throughout the day; avoid chugging down fluids right before exercising to avoid stomach discomfort and bloating.
9. Sports drinks may look appealing, but they contain added sugar. Consider your performance goals before you select a drink. For the average workout of 60 minutes or less, your body usually won't need anything other than water. If you are sweating heavily or exercising for more than 60 minutes, it is likely that you have lost electrolytes, including sodium chloride, potassium calcium and magnesium. For these types of long workouts, a low-calorie beverage that contains electrolytes may help you to rehydrate more efficiently.
10. If you are sufficiently hydrated, your urine will be the color of straw or lemonade. If it is clear, you may be drinking too much. If it is a dark color, such as the color of apple juice, it is a sign of potential dehydration.

11. Drink low-fat or fat-free dairy drinks. All types of milk offers the same key nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D and potassium but the number of calories is very different. Adults need 3 cups of milk per day while children ages 4 to 8 need 2 ½ cups per day and children 2-3 needs 2 cups per day.

Make your beverage choice the “easy” choice and consume plenty of water. Taking steps to make water your main beverage and drinking fewer beverages with fat and sugar will help you to lose weight and feel better.