



Did you know that the average American gets roughly 20% of their daily calories from beverages? With beverages being such a large part of daily calorie intake, people need to know that all beverages are not created equal. When it comes to what to drink, there is a lot of confusion. What kind of juice is best for my child? Do children need to drink whole milk? Is diet soda a good alternative to regular soda? Do I need to get my child a sports drink for their soccer game? Keep reading to learn how to make smart choices when deciding what to drink.



Milk

Milk is a wonderful beverage choice for children and adults. Milk contains essential nutrients such as calcium, potassium, and vitamin D. These nutrients help ensure that bones grow strong and stay strong. However, like most beverages, all milk is not created equal. Whole and 2% milk have a significantly higher fat content than skim or 1% milk. In fact, one cup of whole milk contains as much fat as a hot dog, a snickers bar, or five strips of bacon! The fat contained in milk is the unhealthy fat, saturated fat, which should be limited in the diet. Milk is a great component of a healthy diet, but adults and children over age two should stick to skim or 1% milk.

If your child is lactose intolerant, low fat soy or rice milk are good alternatives. However, try to stay away from flavored milks as they are usually higher in sugar.

Water



Water is an excellent and necessary beverage choice. The human body is primarily made up of water so drinking water is an easy way to stay hydrated. Another good thing about water is that it contains zero calories!

Do you really need to drink eight glasses of water each day? It really isn't a question of how much water you need but how much fluid you need. Everyone should drink water daily, but how much depends on your age, activity level, gender, and diet. If you aren't currently drinking water, try setting a goal to drink 2-4 servings each day.



Juice

Juice is a common beverage choice for kids. It's sweet, it tastes good, and most people think that if its fruit flavored, it's probably almost as good as eating whole fruit...or is it? When choosing

juices, try to choose 100% fruit or vegetable juices instead of regular juices. But remember, having a glass of apple juice is not the same as eating an apple. Juices are processed, which removes a lot of the fiber, vitamins and minerals that are in whole fruit. There are more calories in a serving of fruit juice than in a serving of whole fruit. In fact, fruit juices contain roughly as many calories as a regular soft drink. Vegetable juices (such as tomato juice) have fewer calories than fruit juice but they are higher in sodium (salt). Make smart choices when purchasing juice and limit the amount that you and your children drink. It is a high calorie beverage!



Sports Drinks



Sports drinks are gaining popularity as they are heavily advertised. Sports drinks boast that they replenish the body's lost nutrients after exercise, preventing dehydration and increasing muscle recovery. These claims are absolutely true...for serious athletes. Marathon runners, triathletes, and other major endurance athletes can benefit from drinking sports drinks. However, for most children, water is a better choice than sports drinks. Typically, children and other recreational athletes will not lose enough water or electrolytes to need a sports drinks.

Soft Drinks



No matter what your age, soft drink consumption should be limited. Regular soft drinks are high in calories and sugar. Both diet and regular soft drinks contain phosphorus which competes with calcium for absorption into bones. Children have growing bones so it is imperative to their bone health that they limit soft drink consumption. Also, the sugar and acid in soft drinks has been shown to lead to tooth decay.