



# Hydrate for Your Health

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## Why Drink Water?

About 60% of your total body weight is water and, most, if not all of your bodily functions depend on it. You can only live 3 to 4 days without water. Over half the water you need comes from the liquids you drink; the rest comes from the food you eat. That makes beverages an important part of your diet. Most beverages contain a high percentage of water, which is a nutrient that is essential to life. When choosing beverages make them count as healthful contributions to your diet. Your *best* beverage choices are water, low-fat milk or 100% juice. Choose these over soda, sugary fruit drinks or sports drinks, which are high in calories.

Even small losses of body water can impair activity and judgment, according to LSU AgCenter nutritionist, Dr. Beth Reames. Symptoms of heat related illnesses may include headache, nausea, muscles spasms and fatigue. The following factor may increase risk of heat-related illness:

- Being substantially overweight or underweight.
- Drinking alcoholic beverages.
- Age-related changes to the skin such as poor blood circulation and inefficient sweat glands.
- Heart, lung and kidney diseases as well as any illness causing general weakness or fever.
- High blood pressure or other conditions that require changes in diet. For example, people

- on salt-restricted diets may increase their risk. However, salt pills should not be used without first consulting a doctor.
- The inability to perspire caused by medications including diuretics, sedatives, tranquilizers and certain heart and blood-pressure drugs.
- Taking several drugs for various conditions. It is important, however, to continue to take prescribed medication and discuss possible problems with a physician.

## Make Healthy Beverage Choices

Choosing healthy beverages is a great first-step to an overall healthy diet. Unfortunately, Americans are drinking more soft drinks than ever. Per capita soft-drink consumption has increased almost 500 percent over the past 50 years. There is enough regular soda produced to supply every American with nearly a gallon of soda per week. One reason for the steady rise in soft drink consumption is larger portion sizes; fountain drinks can range in size from 22 to 64 ounces. Children start drinking soda at a remarkably young age, and consumption increases through young adulthood.

## How Much Sugar Is in that Soda?

Sodas are mostly water, sugar or sugar substitute and flavoring. Sugared sodas are a source of empty calories and usually replace nutrient-dense beverages such as milk or juice, both which contain many healthy nutrients. You can easily translate the amount of sugar in soda from grams to teaspoons. A typical 20 oz. soda usually contains 87 grams of

sugar. Knowing that 4 grams is equal to 1 teaspoon, you can figure out that there are about 22 teaspoons of sugar in that 20 ounce bottle of soda. That's a lot of sugar.

### What about Diet Soda?

According to the Mayo Clinic, drinking some diet soda a day, such as one or even two cans isn't likely to hurt you. The artificial sweeteners and other chemicals used in diet soda are safe for most people, and there is no evidence that these ingredients cause cancer. But drinking diet soda will not necessarily help you lose weight or get healthy. In fact, there are studies suggesting that drinking soda of any type, diet or non-diet, leads to obesity and other health problems. *There are plenty of healthier drink choices available.* For example, add small glass of 100-percent fruit juice to your breakfast menu. Peppermint and other teas are great at breakfast, or after a meal. Sip water throughout the day. Sparkling water is another tasty alternative. A splash of lemon juice in your water is a treat.

### How about Sports Drinks?

Sports drinks, another popular type of soft drink, are for athletes who participate in high-intensity, aerobic exercise for at least 90 minutes. Simply put, most people are not this active. The added sugar and sodium in sports drinks are unnecessary for most adults and youth. Sports drinks offer little advantage over water in most cases.

### What about Juice and Juice Drinks?

Drinking 100% fruit or vegetable juice provides Vitamin C and in some cases, Vitamin A and other nutrients. But one serving of juice a day ( $\frac{3}{4}$  cup) should be enough for most of us, as juice can be high in calories. Make sure to read the label and choose 100% juice. Many juice-like or punch drinks are less than 10 percent juice and contain mostly sugar and water and are high in calories and have little nutrient value.

### References

Adapted by Utah State University from:

- Louisiana State University AgCenter: [http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/food\\_health/health/fluids+important+to+everyone+especially+seniors+in+hot+weather.htm](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/en/food_health/health/fluids+important+to+everyone+especially+seniors+in+hot+weather.htm)
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- Wichita State University: [http://education.wichita.edu/caduceus/examples/soda/tbspn\\_in\\_can.html](http://education.wichita.edu/caduceus/examples/soda/tbspn_in_can.html)

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