

The #1 Unhealthy Drinks to Avoid and Healthier Alternatives

It's the end of a long day of school, work or errands and you are thirsty. What type of drink do you grab? If your answer wasn't water, I would encourage you to read the ingredients list and nutrition label of your drink of choice. Many of our favorite drinks are filled with hidden calories from added sugar. Sometimes these drinks are even labeled as a healthier option. Keep reading to learn how to identify a sugary drink. Also, learn simple drink swaps that can reduce calories and improve health.

The #1 Unhealthy Drinks to Avoid

Not surprisingly, sugary drinks are the leading source of sugar in the American diet. According to 2011-2014 data from the Centers for Disease Control and prevention, on a given day 5 in 10 adults drank sugary drinks and drank 145 calories from sugar. This is a problem because regularly drinking sugary drinks is associated with negative health outcomes such as weight gain, obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, kidney diseases, non-alcoholic liver disease, tooth decay and cavities and gout, a type of arthritis. According to experts, in 2010 the U.S. had a total of 25,000 chronic disease deaths related to sugar-sweetened drink consumption. This makes sugar-sweetened drinks the #1 unhealthy drinks to avoid/

How to Identify which Drinks to Avoid

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, sugary drinks are any liquids that are sweetened by adding any form of sugar. These drinks can either be store bought or made at home and may even be one of your favorite drinks including any regular soda, sweetened tea or coffee, fruit drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks or sweetened water.

A typical sugary drink is sweetened with one or more forms of sugar. To learn which forms of sugar are in your favorite drink check the ingredients list for: brown sugar, raw sugar, white sugar, corn syrup, corn sweeteners, malt syrup, honey, molasses or sweeteners that end in -ose and rhyme with gross (dextrose, fructose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, lactose, maltose, or sucrose) . These different names for sugar can make it hard to identify unhealthy drinks to avoid.

No matter the form added sugar provides little nutrients and extra calories. Imagine you started your day with a mocha coffee (**200 extra calories**), enjoy a lemon drink with lunch (**80 extra calories**), have a post-workout sports drink (**90 extra calories**) and end your day with a milkshake for dessert (**468 extra calories**). In this scenario, you would have drunk 838 extra calories for the day. This is the same as eating an extra meal and snack. It is important to know how to identify unhealthy drinks to avoid it for a healthier option.

Healthier Drink Options

The best choice is always to drink water. After all, with your body being made up of greater than 60% water it is what your body is thirsty for. It is also naturally sugar and calorie-free. Here are four healthy drink swaps that can reduce calories and health risk are:

- Instead of soda try carbonated club soda infused with fruit or a splash of 100% fruit juice **(53 fewer calories)**
- Instead of a milkshake try a fruit smoothie made with fresh or frozen fruit, low-fat milk and plain yogurt **(228 fewer calories)**
- Instead of a sports drinks try 8oz or less of 100% coconut water with no added sugar **(44-90 fewer calories)**
- And if you drink coffee, order it plain and lightly flavor it yourself. **(168 fewer calories)**

Are you ready to start avoiding your unhealthy drinks? If so please download our free drink tracker, an excellent resource for creating better drink habits.