

Choose water as a drink

Did you know?

- ★ Children and teenagers who regularly drink soft drinks and other sweetened drinks are more likely to be overweight.
- ★ In NSW, 45% of boys and 38% of girls in Year 6 drink two to six cups of soft drink per week.

Water

Drinking water is the best way to quench your thirst. Even better, it doesn't come with all the sugar and energy (kilojoules) found in fruit juice drinks, soft drinks, sports drinks and flavoured mineral waters.

Drinking water instead of sweetened drinks may also prevent dental problems, while the fluoride found in tap water can help strengthen teeth and bones.

Milk

Milk is a nutritious drink for kids and teens and a great source of calcium, which is important for growing strong bones and teeth.

From 2 years of age, children should drink reduced fat milk. It contains much the same nutrients as full cream milk but is lower in unhealthy saturated fats and lower in energy (kilojoules).

Children under 2 years of age should not drink reduced fat milk as they need the extra energy (kilojoules) for their growth and development.



Fruit juice

Giving kids and teens whole fruit to eat is a better choice than offering fruit juice to drink.

While whole fruit contains some natural sugars that make it taste sweet, it also has lots of vitamins, minerals and fibre, which makes it more filling and nutritious than a glass of fruit juice.

One small glass of juice provides a child's recommended daily amount of vitamin C. Unfortunately, many children regularly drink large amounts of juice and this can contribute to them putting on excess weight.

“Drinking water is the best way to quench your thirst”

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Sweetened drinks: soft drinks, cordials, sports and energy drinks

Soft drinks, cordials, sports and energy drinks and flavoured mineral waters often have large amounts of sugar and kilojoules. In fact, a can of soft drink contains around 10 teaspoons of sugar.

Drinking too many sweetened drinks can cause a range of problems including tooth decay, poor appetite, picky eating, change in bowel habits and putting on excess weight. These drinks should only be consumed occasionally – not every day.

Sweetened drinks containing caffeine

Caffeine is a mildly addictive stimulant drug. Cola-type soft drinks and energy drinks contain caffeine as well as lots of sugar. Higher amounts of caffeine are found in energy drinks. There are many side effects of caffeine consumption, particularly in kids and teens. These include disturbed sleep, bedwetting, anxiety and headache – even from drinking quite small amounts. There is also a link between caffeine in soft drinks and bone fractures. Consumption by kids and teens of cola drinks, particularly energy drinks, is best avoided.

Ideas to help kids and teens drink more water

- Pack a water bottle whenever you go out.
- In summer, pack a frozen water bottle in your child's lunch box.

- Don't keep sweetened drinks at home; make cold water available instead.
- Water down sweetened drinks – such as cordials or fruit juice – for a short time and then start to replace them with plain water.
- When playing sport, encourage kids to drink water rather than sports drinks or energy drinks.
- Serve plain water in decorative jugs. Add slices of lemon, orange or mint for flavour and, in summer, add ice cubes to keep it chilled.
- Serve sweetened drinks in smaller glasses and only have them occasionally – not every day.

Remember

- Choose water as a drink.
- Sweetened drinks such as soft drinks, fruit juice drinks, cordials, sports and energy drinks are not a necessary part of a healthy diet.
- Regularly offering sweetened drinks makes it harder to choose water as a drink.
- If sweetened drinks are on the menu, try not to include them every day and choose healthier options, such as watered-down versions of favourite drinks. These will still quench your thirst, but without the excess sugar and kilojoules. It can also help reduce the preference for strongly sweetened drinks.

For more information and ideas on healthy eating and physical activity, go to www.healthykids.nsw.gov.au