

Dental Health Services

When you need a drink

A guide for choosing drinks
for children and adults



Water – the best thirst quencher

For thirsty children and adults, fresh cool water is the best and cheapest thirst quencher of all.

Water is vital for our bodies to function properly. Water is also good for teeth, as the fluoride in it helps prevent tooth decay.

You can enjoy drinking water and make it appealing by:

- keeping it chilled and serving it in a special glass or bottle
- adding novelty shaped ice cubes or frozen pieces of fruit
- adding lemon slices to water for an extra refreshing taste.

There are many drinks on the market today and people are often confused about their nutritional value and role in the diet. Drinking fruit juices, soft drinks and sports drinks occasionally will not be harmful to health and can be pleasurable.

However, regular over consumption of sugary drinks increases the risk of developing tooth decay and of becoming overweight.

The truth about sugar

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend that we should 'eat only a moderate amount of sugars and foods containing added sugars'.

Food and drinks both contribute to total sugar consumption but drinks don't make you feel as full as solid foods, so you can take in a lot of sugar (and kilojoules) and still feel hungry.

Sugar comes from two sources. It can occur naturally in foods and drinks such as fruit and milk. Sugar can also be added or 'hidden' in everyday processed foods and drinks such as cereal, fruit juices and soft drinks. Sugar is the main dietary cause of TOOTH DECAY. *Too much sugar too often* can lead to dental decay.

Most of the 44kg of sugar consumed per person per year in Australia comes from processed foods and drinks. Read product labels for sugar hidden in the ingredients. Did you know that ingredients are listed in descending order of amounts? Avoid those products which have sugar listed high in the order of ingredients. Look for sugar added in other names, such as:

- sugar
- maltose
- fructose
- cane sugar
- sucrose
- glucose

INGREDIENTS: WATER, SUCROSE SYRUP, GLUCOSE SYRUP, GLUCOSE-FRUCTOSE SYRUP, CITRIC ACID, NATURAL LEMON AND LIME FLAVOURS, SALT, SODIUM CITRATE, MONOPOTASSIUM PHOSPHATE, ESTER GUM, YELLOW 5



Sugar content of common drinks

The following table lists a number of common drinks and the approximate number of teaspoons of sugar per **container**.

| TYPE AND AMOUNT OF DRINK | SUGAR approx tsp/container |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 250ml pack (1 cup) Choc Flavoured soymilk | 3 |
| 250 ml pack Fruit juice drink | 5 |
| 250 ml pack Red Bull | 5-6 |
| 300 ml carton Chocolate flavoured milk | 5 |
| 375 ml can Cola soft drink | 8 |
| 375 ml can Regular soft drink | 7-9 |
| 375 ml can Diet cola soft drink | 0 |
| 500 ml bottle Flavoured iced tea | 6-11 |
| 500 ml bottle Flavoured iced tea - light | 0 |
| 600 ml bottle Sports drink | 7-10 |
| 600 ml bottle Powerade | 7-8 |
| 750 ml bottle Wine | 1-2 |

Table data compiled from different sources



Alcopops are drinks that combine alcohol and soft drink and are known as ready to drink mixers. Their high sugar content make them particularly palatable and popular to young drinkers.

Many drinks such as fruit juices, soft, sports and energy drinks are highly acidic and are a major cause of tooth erosion. Frequent consumption of anything acidic can soften the tooth surface and cause a loss of enamel, known as tooth erosion.

Drinks containing alcohol or caffeine, can cause dehydration and a dry mouth. Saliva is a natural protector of our teeth, it dilutes and neutralises acids. If a person has hardly any saliva then they are more prone to tooth erosion and tooth decay.

Soft drinks

The main ingredients of soft drinks are sugar and water. Regular soft drinks do not provide any nutritional value other than carbohydrate. Drinking soft drinks between meals increases the risk of becoming obese and developing dental decay and tooth erosion.

Artificially sweetened soft drinks will not cause tooth decay. However, they are still acidic and these drinks may also encourage children to develop a preference for sugary foods and drinks. Soft drinks should only be consumed occasionally and where possible through a straw to reduce contact with teeth.



Fruit juices

Many people drink fruit based drinks to increase their intake of vitamin C. In Australia, we can get all the vitamins and nutrients we need by eating a balanced diet with fresh fruit and vegetables.

All fruit juices are acidic, have naturally occurring sugar, and some have 'added' sugars. **All** forms of sugar place the teeth at risk of developing tooth decay. The acidity of fruit juice also places the teeth at risk of tooth erosion.

To reduce these risks, have fruit juice only occasionally, diluted and through a straw.

When juice is squeezed from fruits, the fibre is largely left behind in the pulp. This is why fruit juices are not a rich source of fibre. It is better to eat the whole fruit, as this provides nutrients and fibre.

Excessive consumption of fruit juices by young children can cause diarrhoea and an imbalance in nutrient intake resulting in 'failure to thrive.'

Acidic drinks consumed more than 4–6 times a week put teeth at risk. pH is a measure of the acidity of substances. When the pH goes below 5.5, tooth enamel can begin to dissolve. Drinks with a pH below 5.5 should be consumed in moderation.

| | |
|--------|---------|
| Saliva | 7.0 |
| Milk | 6.9 |
| Water | 6.0–7.0 |

.....pH 5.5.....

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| Beer | 4.0–5.0 |
| Herbal Teas | 3.1–3.8 |
| Sports drinks | 3.0 |
| Orange Juice | 2.8–4.0 |
| Soft/diet drinks | 2.7 |
| Alcopops | 2.5–2.8 |
| Wine | 2.3–3.8 |
| Stomach Acid | 1.5 |

Sports drinks

The consumption of sports drinks is booming in popularity and not just among elite athletes. Teenagers are also drinking sports drinks in place of other drinks. While these drinks play an important role in fluid replacement and helping to maintain high energy levels, they can also be a dental concern.

The sugar content and acidity levels of sports drinks, combined with a dry mouth, means that the teeth are exposed to acid attack without sufficient saliva to protect them. This increases the risk of tooth decay and erosion, especially when sports drinks are consumed frequently and in excess.

Sports drinks are best suited when performing high intensity endurance sports or during heavy training.

After drinking sports drinks, the mouth should be rinsed with water to reduce the harmful effects on teeth.



Flavoured milk

Flavoured milk drinks contain whole or reduced fat milk plus artificial colourings and sugar. **Plain milk is best.** Milk contains natural sugar, it is not acidic and is also a good source of calcium and other important minerals. Check product labels on flavoured milks for sugar content.

Milk is only one part of a balanced diet. It is really as much a food as a drink. As a thirst quencher, milk should be consumed in moderation to prevent it replacing other nutritious foods.



Drinks for babies and toddlers

Breast milk supplies all the nutrients and fluid babies need in the first six months and additional drinks are not needed. Cool, boiled water can be given to formula fed babies in hot weather, in addition to their usual milk intake, if necessary. Breast and formula fed babies do not need extra vitamin C. Therefore, fruit juices are **not** necessary for infants or children.



Drinks and baby teeth

Baby teeth are important for eating, speaking, smiling and to maintain the space for the permanent teeth.

Babies and toddlers are at risk of developing tooth decay when sugary liquids are in the mouth frequently or for extended periods. The term 'Early Childhood Caries' is used to describe the severe form of tooth decay affecting mainly the top front teeth of infants.

To prevent Early Childhood Caries, a baby should have a bottle only at feed times or when he or she is hungry. Remove the bottle as soon as the baby is satisfied.

Babies should not be put to bed with a bottle containing anything other than water. Do not allow a child to walk around with sweetened drinks in a bottle, or any container which encourages frequent sipping, as this exposes the teeth to sugar frequently. A cup can be introduced at around 6 months of age.

Plain cool water is the best drink for children of all ages. Encourage children to drink water and plain milk in moderation as their regular drinks – they **will** drink these if no alternative is offered.

When you need a drink... **REMEMBER**

- Water is the cheapest and best thirst quencher and everyone should be encouraged to drink water, or milk in moderation as it is a food.
- Most drinks provide very little or no nutritional value, can be acidic and high in sugar. These drinks should only be consumed occasionally and preferably with a meal.
- To reduce the acidic effect of drinks:
 - drink ice-cold
 - drink through a straw
 - do not sip or swish around the mouth.
- Drinks which have sugar listed high in the order of ingredients should be avoided.





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