

Parent Communications— Be Sugar Smart

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Sugar Is Sweet—and Drinks Are Too?

What is the largest source of added sugar in children's diets? It's not cake or candy—it's drinks sweetened with sugar! Children, especially teenagers, are drinking more soft drinks, punch, and sports drinks than ever before. The added sugar in these drinks provides few nutrients for growing bodies; in fact, a diet high in sugar increases a child's chance of becoming overweight, getting too little calcium (from not drinking milk), and getting dental cavities. In adults, consuming sugar-sweetened beverages may also increase the risk for type 2 diabetes.

The problem is that most of the time children (and parents!) don't realize how much sugar is added to their favorite drinks. Teaching kids to be sugar smart while they are still young can help them make better choices for years to come. With so many sugary products available, setting a good example at home is more important than ever.

What can you do to make sure your family is sugar smart?

- ▶ Serve your children water and low-fat or nonfat milk during snack and meal times. Serving 100% juice is okay too, as long as the quantities are limited to no more than 8 ounces per day. Dilute 100% juice with sparkling water for a refreshing drink.
- ▶ Read drink labels in order to avoid purchasing drinks high in added sugars. Added sugar can be listed as sucrose, high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, or fruit juice concentrate.
- ▶ Set limits on soft drinks and other sugar-filled drinks. If your children enjoy soft drinks, try buying the half cans so they can satisfy their sweet tooth without overindulging. Allowing soft drinks only once a week or on special occasions is another way to set limits.
- ▶ Save sports drinks for intense sports competition (lasting more than 1 hour) or for when kids are playing hard for a long time in the heat.
- ▶ Try naturally sweetened snacks such as fresh, frozen, or dried fruit in the place of high-sugar options. Or choose whole-grain snacks with only a small amount of added sugar, such as whole-grain cereal with no more than 5 to 10 grams of sugar per serving.

From L.W.Y. Cheung, H. Dart, S. Kalin, and S.L. Gortmaker, 2007, *Eat Well & Keep Moving*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics). Adapted, by permission, from *Food & Fun After School Parent Communications*. ©2006 President and Fellows of Harvard College.