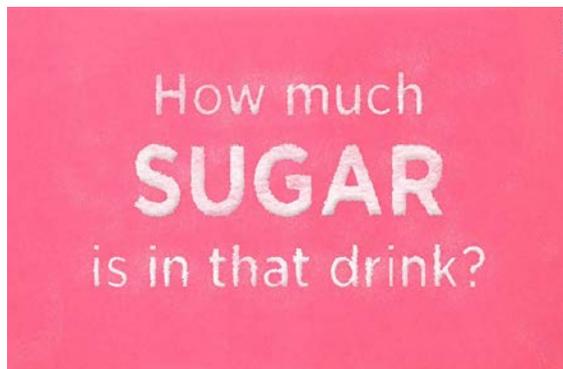


The York University Staff Association Health & Wellness News and Views

We all know water is the given number one drink to quench your thirst. However, when you crave something a little more, you might lean toward fruit juice, lemonade or iced tea. These choices can become problematic due to the deceptively high sugar content. In fact, in some cases you might as well have reached for a pop. Sugary drinks make up almost half of all added sugar in the average diet making them a major contributor to the obesity epidemic. Studies show that on any given day 1 in 4 Canadians consume at least 200 calories from such drinks and 5% drink 565 calories, equivalent to four cans of pop per day. Some people even admit to drinking more pop than water each day, or no water at all. The term "soft drink" refers to any beverage with added sugar or other sweetener, and includes pop, fruit punch, sweetened ice tea, lemonade, and other "ades" sweetened powdered drinks, sports and energy drinks. Soft drinks are heavily consumed in part because companies promote them vigorously. Billions of dollars are spent on advertising sugary beverages. They are marketed everywhere, in stores, restaurants, gas stations, community centres, and even schools. Soft drinks are a multi-billion dollar product, and they account for a quarter of all drinks consumed in Canada. If you were to drink just one sugar sweetened soft drink per day, and not cut back on calories elsewhere, you could gain 5 lbs in a year. That's why making smarter choices about these sips can pay off big time for your waistline. Here are a few places to start.



You'd think fruit juice would be healthy, after all it's made from fruit. However... what many people fail to realize is that fruit juice is also loaded with sugar. In fact, fruit juice can contain just as much sugar and calories as a sugary soft drink... and sometimes even more. Fruit juice is not always the better choice. Although small amounts of fruit juice (or soda) are unlikely to cause major problems for healthy, lean and active people, this can be a complete disaster for people who are overweight or have diet-related metabolic problems. Fruit juice is missing a lot of the stuff that makes whole fruit healthy. Orange juice, for example, does contain Vitamin C and is a decent source of folate, potassium and Vitamin B1. But calorie for calorie (or sugar gram for sugar gram), it is nutritionally poor compared to whole oranges. Bottom line is Fruit juice contains some nutrients, but less compared to the whole fruit.

Many teenagers believe that caffeine in energy drinks may give them the edge on the sports field. Others feel that these caffeinated drinks help them in the classroom, and some just think they need the added boost to get through their day. But 20 tsp's of sugar is three times the adult maximum for an entire day. Sugary processed products like Energy drinks contain minimal vitamin and mineral content, making them empty sources of calories. Caffeine is the most widely used drug on the planet and has been used for centuries for its stimulating effects. This common stimulant is found naturally in coffee and tea so when you need that extra pick me up why not stick nature's stimulant.

You're probably sipping this as part of a mixed drink at happy hour rather than on its own. However if you're doing it because you think a "gin and tonic" is a healthier choice than a "rum and coke" you're mistaken. Fizz check! It's a common misconception that tonic water and soda water are the same thing. You may be shocked to find out that there's a huge difference between the two waters when it comes to calorie counting. Just because it contains the word water in its name and is carbonated doesn't mean that tonic water is in the same category as bubbly

waters. Tonic water is a bitter drink (a result of the addition of quinine) which pairs particularly well with gin. Also unlike the other waters, Tonic contains calories — about 130 for 12 fluid ounces. That's almost as much sugar as a regular pop. Water is not always created equal.

Sports drinks appear to be a mainstay among athletes. Gatorade Thirst Quencher was the first, but there are plenty of options now a days. True, they do quench thirst however, these popular drinks come with a hefty downside. Sports drinks contain high amounts of sodium, which are thought to replenish the electrolytes lost while sweating. But, in my humble opinion very few exercisers work out hard enough that a sports drink is necessary. Additionally, the leading brands typically contain as much as two-thirds the sugar of regular pop. Many varieties also contain high-fructose corn syrup or artificial sweeteners, flavourings and food colouring. At the end of the day, plain old water is still the standard go-to when it comes to rehydration after a hard workout.

Dozens of recent studies explored possible links between sugary beverages and weight, and they consistently show that increased consumption is associated with increased caloric intake. Which inevitably leads to weight gain. So cutting out that good-for-nothing sugary drink from your life will seemingly only offer you good things, by eliminating several unnecessary and unhealthy calories from your diet and improving your overall health.