

Make Healthy Drink Choices

Building a healthy eating routine isn't just about the foods you eat — it's important to pay attention to your drink choices, too. Too many calories from drinks can make it hard to stay at a healthy weight.

Follow these tips to make healthy drink choices.



Drink more water

When you're thirsty, **reach for water first!** Water helps you stay hydrated without adding calories.

Try these tips to drink more water:



Carry a reusable water bottle to refill during the day



Keep a cold pitcher of water in the front of your fridge



Try unsweetened sparkling water if you like bubbles



Add fruit or herbs to your water for a fresh flavor

Choose low-fat or fat-free milk or dairy alternatives

Milk is a good way to get calcium and other important nutrients. Choose **low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk** instead of whole or 2%. Whole and 2% milk have more saturated fat — and too much saturated fat can raise your risk of heart disease.

If you're lactose-intolerant, you can try **lactose-free milk** — just make sure to choose low-fat or fat-free versions. And if you avoid dairy altogether, **unsweetened fortified soy beverages** are a great alternative! Look for soy milks fortified with calcium, vitamin A, and vitamin D.



Skip drinks with added sugars

Added sugars include sugars that are added to foods and drinks, foods packaged as sweeteners (such as table sugar), and sugars from syrups and honey. When you choose drinks with added sugars, it's hard to get all the nutrients you need without getting too many calories. Avoid or limit sugary drinks like:

- Soda
- Sports drinks
- Energy drinks
- Fruit drinks (like fruit punch)
- Sweetened waters
- Sweetened coffee and tea drinks

Calories in sugary drinks add up fast. For example, if you aim for 2,000 calories a day, just 2 servings of fruit punch could add up to almost a quarter of your daily calories! See how many calories are in some popular drinks.

Drink (12-ounce serving)	Total calories
Sweetened tea	115 calories
Regular soda	156 calories
Lemonade	171 calories
Chai latte	180 calories
Fruit drink (like fruit punch)	238 calories
Cafe mocha	290 calories



What about fruit juice?

Most of the time, **choose whole fruits** instead of juice. Whole fruits have fiber you need to stay healthy. If you do drink juice:

- Choose 100% fruit juice — which doesn't have any added sugars
- Have a small serving — aim for 4 ounces or less
- Try mixing 100% fruit juice with plain or sparkling water to reduce calories

Note that fruit juice isn't recommended for children ages 1 to 2 years — and it's especially important not to give juice to kids younger than 1.

What about drinks with low- and no-calorie sweeteners?

Low- and no-calorie sweeteners — like in “diet” sodas and sugar-free syrups — can help cut down on added sugars and calories. But experts aren't sure if they can help manage your weight in the long term. If you have questions about how to manage your weight, talk with your doctor or a registered dietitian.



And to learn more about low- and no-calorie sweeteners, go to [fda.gov/food/food-additives-petitions/high-intensity-sweeteners](https://www.fda.gov/food/food-additives-petitions/high-intensity-sweeteners).

Make careful coffee and tea choices

Coffee and tea can be part of a healthy eating routine, but sweeteners and cream can add a lot of calories and saturated fat. Try these tips when you drink coffee and tea:

- Try plain coffee or tea, without sweeteners or cream
- If you like sweet-tasting drinks, add just 1 teaspoon or less of sugar or honey — or use a low- or no-calorie sweetener
- If you like creamier drinks, add low-fat (1%) or fat-free (skim) milk instead of cream
- At coffee shops and restaurants, look for calorie information on the menu — and limit drinks with a lot of calories like chai lattes or cafe mochas

Drink alcohol only in moderation — or don't drink at all

If you're age 21 or older and you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation:

- 1 drink or less in a day for women
- 2 drinks or less in a day for men

Remember that **drinking less is always healthier** than drinking more. Even moderate drinking may raise your risk of some types of heart disease and cancer. And alcohol adds calories to your diet, so drinking can make it harder to stay at a healthy weight.

If you're pregnant, don't drink alcohol at all — it's not safe for your baby.



What about caffeine?

It's safe for most adults to have caffeine in moderation — that means about 400 milligrams or less per day (the amount in about 4 cups of coffee). But caffeine affects some people more than others, so you may need to have less. And remember that tea, sodas, and energy drinks can also have a lot of caffeine.

If you're pregnant or breastfeeding, talk with your doctor about how much caffeine is safe.





What counts as 1 drink?

Different drinks have different amounts of alcohol — in general, 1 drink is equal to a:

- Bottle of regular beer (12 ounces)
- Glass of wine (5 ounces)
- Shot of liquor, like rum or vodka (1.5 ounces)
- Mixed drink, like a rum and cola (7 ounces)

And calories from alcohol can add up fast! See how many calories are in just 1 drink.

Drink	Total calories
Bottle of regular beer	150 calories
Glass of wine	120 calories
Shot of liquor	100 calories
Mixed drink, like a rum and cola	190 calories

Find tips to cut back on drinking and tools to add up calories from alcohol at [RethinkingDrinking.niaaa.nih.gov](https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov).

Remember, small changes make a big difference! So **start simple** — make healthier drink choices today.

- Learn about the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and get more resources to help you eat healthy at [DietaryGuidelines.gov](https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov)
- Find more healthy eating tips and recipes at [MyPlate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov)

