



Drink up some *Beverage* Knowledge



Many of us watch what we eat but not what we drink. That's a mistake. The average American gets a fifth of daily calories from beverages. Choosing the right drinks can tweak your metabolism, curb your appetite, and reduce your total calorie count. Which drinks are **spoilers** and which are **helpers**?

Spoiler: Soda Chugging a bottle of soda, you consume hundreds of empty calories. According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, carbonated soft drinks are the single biggest source of calories in the American diet. Switching to diet soft drinks is an obvious way to cut calories, but it's unclear whether this switch results in weight loss. In some people, diet soda may increase their sweet tooth. **Also, the acid content in sodas can erode teeth enamel over time and the sugar content can increase the risk of cavities.**

Helper: Water Drinking a glass of water before a meal may encourage the stomach to feel full more quickly, so you don't eat as much. In addition, new research suggests drinking plenty of water may have a positive effect on your metabolism.

Jury's Out: Fruit Juice Juice can have as many calories as soda, but it has far more to offer in the way of nutrients. This presents a dilemma -- you want the vitamins and antioxidants without all the extra sugar. The safest bet: Look for 100% fruit juice. Steer clear of juice drinks that have added sweeteners. Look for the percent of real juice, noted on the nutritional label. You can also slash calories by drinking water with juice added. Also, the high sugar content can lead to an increase in tooth decay.

Helper: Vegetable Juice Vegetable juice is every bit as nutritious as fruit juice with about half the calories. A 12-ounce serving of tomato juice has 80 calories, compared to 160 calories for orange juice. Vegetable juice with pulp is also high in fiber and can help control hunger.

Jury's Out: Smoothies Blend a banana, strawberries, and blueberries into a frothy smoothie and you've got a delicious arsenal of disease-fighting vitamins and minerals. Skim milk and fresh fruit are all you need. Restaurant smoothies may contain ice cream, honey, or other sweeteners that boost the calorie count sky-high.

Jury's Out: Low-Fat Milk Consuming calcium-rich foods may do a body good, depriving the body of calcium, on the other hand, has been shown to trigger an increase in the production of fat cells. To get the benefits of calcium without consuming extra fat, stick to skim or low-fat milk, yogurt, and cheese.

Spoiler: Energy Drinks Sports and energy drinks are calorie bombs like soda. They may have more added nutrients, but you can find the same vitamins and minerals in low-calorie foods. Also, the sugar content can lead to increase risk of tooth cavities.

Helper: Black Coffee When you need a shot of caffeine, coffee is a better choice than soda or energy drinks. Black coffee is calorie-free and rich in antioxidants. Studies have shown that consuming moderate amounts of coffee (about 3 to 4 cups a day) may improve mood and concentration, and reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes and several types of cancer.

Spoiler: Fancy Coffee Once you add heavy cream, flavored syrups, and/or a snowcap of whipped cream, that innocent mug of black coffee becomes a minefield of fat and sugar. Add a little skim milk and artificial sweetener to reduce calorie s

Helper: Green Tea Green tea is another excellent choice when you're looking for a little caffeine. Not only is it calorie-free, some research suggests green tea extract may stimulate weight loss through the action of phytochemicals. These are plant-based compounds that may temporarily cause the body to burn more calories for a short time. Green tea can even help prevent tooth decay! Just as its bacteria-destroying abilities can help prevent food poisoning, it can also kill the bacteria that causes dental plaque.