

## Not All Drinks Hydrate Equally

Proper hydration is important year around, but it's especially important in the hot summer months. I often see thirsty people reach for large, sugary sodas, sweetened iced teas and flavored sports drinks to quench their thirst. In the moment, these drinks might seem like a good option: they taste good, they are readily available and they are usually inexpensive. But drinking sugar sweetened drinks when it's hot out, especially if you're really thirsty, can leave you even thirstier than you were when you started. I experienced this firsthand as a teenager: I grew up in Central California where the summer heat regularly exceeded 110 degrees on any given day. One particularly sweltering day, I remember feeling exceptionally thirsty. I decided to stop at a corner store and buy myself a large bottle of fruit punch. I was so thirsty, I drank the entire bottle within 2 minutes, and let me tell you: I instantly regretted it. This day stands out in my mind because I remember feeling so sick afterwards. All of the liquid from the fruit punch filled up my stomach, but all the sugar in the drink left me even thirstier than I was in the beginning! I felt so full, yet still so very thirsty.

While sugary drinks do provide us with the water our bodies need, the high sugar content in these drinks makes us crave even more water so that our bodies can dilute all of that excess sugar it's taken in. A similar event happens with caffeinated beverages: while caffeinated drinks and teas also provide some water to help us rehydrate, the caffeine in these drinks is a diuretic. Diuretics cause us to urinate more frequently, thus expelling much of the water we just ingested.

Sports drinks, while a better choice than soda and caffeinated drinks, do still have fairly high amounts of sugar in them, even though they don't taste very sweet. A 12oz. bottle of Gatorade® Fruit Punch has as much sugar as 4 Double Stuff Oreo® cookies. Bet you didn't know that, huh?

So what are some good options for hydration? Well the simple answer of course is good 'ole plain water. It is calorie-free, sugar-free and caffeine free. Plus it's what exactly our bodies need when we're dehydrated. But I know there are times when plain water just doesn't cut it, and we want something different. That's when you can get creative! You can make infused water. This is done by adding any number of fresh fruits or vegetables to a pitcher of cold water and letting it sit in your refrigerator for a while. You can add sliced citrus fruits, crushed mint, sliced cucumber or berries. After about an hour or so, you remove the items you added, and you are left with a refreshing, infused, homemade water. If you need some carbonation in your drinks, try sparkling water with a splash of fruit juice. You would only want to add about ¼ cup of juice to about 12 oz. of sparkling water. Even that small amount of juice will add tons of flavor, and only a fraction of the calories and sugar of a regular soft drink.

And lastly, there will be times when you will want to have a nice, cold soft drink, and no amount of infused water will satisfy you. That's perfectly fine! Enjoy your soda. Remember that there are no "good" foods or "bad" foods; everything is okay in moderation. Just keep in mind that moderation doesn't mean daily, and all of us should take steps toward limiting high-calorie, high-sugar foods to special events and occasional treats.

Happy hydrating!