



Sweetened Beverages - Amanda Thul, RD, LD

Sweetened beverages are the leading source of added sugars in American’s diets. They account for 36% of the added sugars we consume on a regular basis. Sweetened beverages consist of more than just regular pop...it includes lemonade, sweetened tea & coffee, sports drinks, and juice “drinks.” The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugar to 9 teaspoons a day for men and 6 teaspoons a day for women or less than 10% of your total calories coming from added sugar. Here are some examples, from the CDC, of commonly consumed beverages and how much added sugar they contain.

Drink (12-ounce serving)	Teaspoons of Sugar	Total Drink Calories
Tap or Unsweetened Bottled Water	0	0
Unsweetened Tea	0	0
Lemonade, powder, prepared with water	3	55
Sports Drinks	5	97
Brewed Sweet Tea	7	115
Energy Drink	9	162
Regular Soda	10	155
Fruit Juice Drink	10	186
Regular Orange Soda	13	195

My message is not that these are “bad” or that we need to avoid them all together. What I’d like you to take away from this is the awareness of what your beverage is providing. Consuming an excessive amount of added sugar on a regular basis can negatively impact our health in many ways. Filling up on sweetened beverages can make it harder to get all of the good things our bodies need in a safe calorie range. Instead of going from one extreme of regularly consuming them to completely cutting them out (this likely will lead to an increase in drinking them down the road), I’d like you to think about what changes around them feel right for you. Maybe drinking a smaller portion by buying smaller containers or pouring into a glass full of ice? Or maybe cutting back on how often you drink them by replacing your sweetened beverage with a glass of water 1-2 times a week? Reducing sweetened beverages is a very personal choice on what change is realistic and maintainable.

I would also like to note that 100% fruit juice does not count as a sweetened beverage. The sugar it contains is natural from the fruit and there isn’t any extra added. Drinking about 4oz of 100% juice a day can be a healthy way to add some vitamins and minerals to your day. I also do not get worried about flavored milk. You still get all of the protein, vitamin D, calcium, potassium, and other nutrients for our bodies. There are some people out there who will only drink flavored milk and if you’re going to choose between flavored milk or another sweetened beverage, I’d rather you choose the milk!