

BEVERAGE CHOICES



Sarah Brandt, Registered Dietitian, Tomah Health

Beverage choices are just as important as food choices.

Drinking sugary beverages can lead to unneeded and empty calories.

Here are a few tips for making healthy beverage choices.

Drink Plenty of Water

Water is an essential nutrient and key component for good health. It helps your muscles and brain stay hydrated for optimal physical and mental performance. How much water you need depends on many factors, including your health, activity level and where you live. Unfortunately, no single formula fits everyone. Your doctor or registered dietitian can help you determine the amount of water that's right for you every day.

Choose Nutrient-Rich Dairy Beverages

Calcium found in dairy foods helps to build and maintain healthy bones, teeth and muscle mass. Fat free or low fat options provide all the nutrients with less fat and calories. Plant based beverages fortified with calcium are also a good option – opt for the unsweetened varieties or you may be drinking added sugars you don't need.

Limit Amount of Juice per Day

Limit juice to 4 -6 ounces per day. While 100% juice can be a great source of several nutrients, it is possible to get too much of a good thing. Whole fruits and vegetables are a much better way to get the nutrients and fluid your body needs. Actual foods tend to be more satisfying as well, and you get the added value of fiber and phytonutrients from the skin and pulp.

Drink Other Beverages with Care

Soft drinks, sweetened teas, fruit drinks and many sports and energy drinks can be high in calories, sugars and often caffeine. Specialty coffee drinks are often high in calories, fat and sugar. Alcoholic drinks can be packed with empty calories and offer little to no nutritional value.

Keep these suggestions in mind when picking up drinks with extra calories in them:

- Read the labels. Check amounts of caffeine, sugar and saturated fat on the nutrition facts label. If you can't find the facts, check the company's website.

- Avoid energy drinks with high amounts of caffeine. Do not consume highly caffeinated beverages with alcohol.

- Start with small portions. Moderation is key to treating your body well.

