



Drink smart

You are what you eat... and drink! Aetna Resources For LivingSM

Most people know foods with lots of sugar and calories can be unhealthy. But did you know you're faced with those same challenges in the drink aisle too?

It's important to be conscious of drinks that come with added calories, sugar, fat, caffeine, carbonation and/or alcohol. Making better choices begins with knowing what's in everything you drink.

Make a habit of reading the labels on store-bought beverages. You might wonder what to do about alcoholic drinks, restaurant, fountain or coffee-shop drinks without labels. If your server doesn't know what's in them, look online or call the brand's corporate office and ask.

Talk to your doctor or a qualified nutritionist about which types of liquids will help you keep your hydration and health at their best.

It's important to think about:

- **Servings per container.** This is the total drink size divided by the serving size. For instance, if a serving is 16 fluid ounces and the container is 64 fluid ounces, you're getting four servings if you drink it all. In that case, you'll need to multiply all the values by four unless you're only drinking a portion of the drink.
- **Calories.** Drinking water is one good way to stay hydrated. The more water you drink, the more liquid calories you can avoid each day. That can add up to weight lost over time. And weight never gained in the first place! Sugary and alcoholic beverages have especially high calorie counts.
- **Fat.** Just like food, drinks can contain fat too. Shakes, coffee, beverages topped with whipped cream, milk and even smoothies can have high fat content.
- **Carbohydrates.** Drinking sugary drinks can leave you feeling tired and even more thirsty. And they can contribute to weight gain. Most beverages labeled "diet" have low to no carbohydrates and calories. Consider switching some or all of your sweet drinks to water or diet versions to cut back on sugar and calories.



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- **Fiber.** You can get fiber from certain drinks, but keep in mind that many fruit and vegetable juices give you the sugar without the fiber. Read the labels and see.
- **Protein.** Many drinks have no protein. But some protein shakes can help suppress your appetite and may even contain little or no sugar.
- **Sodium.** While people need a certain amount of sodium – or salt – each day, most Americans get too much. The more you can limit sodium in your liquid intake, the better.
- **Carbonation.** The fizz from sodas and “sparkling” drinks can also cause stomach upset. If you’re sensitive to it, it’s best to avoid it entirely. Otherwise, consume in moderation.
- **Caffeine.** Sometimes it takes a phone call to the company to find out how much caffeine you’re getting from products that don’t list it on the label. But it’s important to make sure you’re not drinking too much of it. High-caffeine energy or coffee drinks especially can add up quickly if you’re not aware of the serving size and amount of caffeine per serving. And even decaffeinated coffee and tea still contain a lesser amount. Too much caffeine can cause discomfort and in some cases can harm your health or even be fatal. Women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant and nursing mothers should avoid caffeine or talk to their doctor about how much is safe for the baby. Children are advised not to drink caffeine at all and teens shouldn’t drink as much as adults. Even an amount deemed safe for adults can lead to unpleasant side effects in adults who are sensitive to caffeine, have certain health conditions or take certain medications. And it’s a good idea to avoid drinking caffeine and alcohol together.¹

- **Alcohol.** Food and other drinks are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. That’s why they’re required to include nutritional labels with certain information. Alcohol is regulated by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB). So it can be tough to know how many calories and carbohydrates you’re getting, and it could easily be more than you’d expect. Just as it’s important to know the percentage of alcohol, knowing the other nutritional values also helps with making healthy choices. Alcohol can also dehydrate you. Women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant shouldn’t drink alcohol at all. Nursing mothers shouldn’t drink alcohol without first talking to their doctor about keeping their baby safe and healthy.

By paying attention to what you drink, you can stay hydrated and feel your best.



¹Caffeine: How much is too much? MayoClinic.org. Accessed on July 25, 2019.

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