

Beverages That Support Health & Physical Activity



Water is the best choice to quench your thirst and to help you participate fully in recreation or sport activities. Other healthy beverage choices include white milk and unsweetened fortified plant-based beverages such as soy or almond milk.

Sugary Drinks are Not Recommended

Sugary drinks can interfere with hydration, making them a poor choice before, during and after an activity. They contain high amounts of sugar which can lead to tooth decay, especially when sipped over long periods.

Sugary drinks include:

- Pop
- Fruit juice (including 100%)
- Sports drinks
- Energy drinks
- Flavoured waters with added sugars
- Fruit-flavoured drinks like fruit punch
- Hot chocolate
- Chocolate milk
- Specialty coffee and teas (e.g., iced teas, cappuccinos, etc.)
- Sweetened plant-based beverages (e.g., flavoured soy, almond, or rice milk)

The chart below shows the sugar content in a 250 millilitres (mL) (1 cup) serving of some sugary drinks. Most of these beverages are purchased and consumed in larger portions, such as in 355 mL cans or 591 mL bottles, so the amount of sugar the drink contains could be much more than what's shown in the table.

Sugar Content of Common Beverages (per 250 mL serving)	
100% Orange Juice	26 g [6.5 teaspoons (tsp)]
Fruit Drinks and Fruit Punches	33 g [8.25 tsp]
Pop	28 g [7 tsp]
Iced Tea	23 g [5.75 tsp]
Sports Drink, Fruit Flavoured	16 g [4 tsp]

Source: Health Canada, 2010. Nutrient Values in Some Common Foods

Sports Drinks

Generally, plain water will quench your thirst and help you participate fully if you are active for less than an hour, or when you are participating in an activity at a moderate intensity such as walking quickly, skating, bike riding and skateboarding.

Sports drinks are designed to replace glucose (sugar) in the muscles and replace the fluid and the electrolytes (sodium and potassium) lost in sweat. Sports drinks may be helpful in the following situations:

- prolonged (i.e., continuous for at least 60 minutes) and vigorous competitive sport or physical activity, e.g., running, soccer, basketball, cross-country skiing, hiking, swimming, etc.
- activity in extreme heat, or
- if you've missed a pre-activity meal or snack (note: a pre-activity meal or snack that includes a mix of carbohydrate and protein is always recommended over consuming a sports drink. For example, banana and hard cheese portion)

While sports drinks are marketed to optimize sport performance, data showing positive effects in children are limited. Stick with water as the best beverage choice for hydration.

Energy Drinks

Energy drinks can be harmful because of their high levels of caffeine and other ingredients. Energy drinks should not be sold or provided at activities with children and/or youth participants. What you should know about energy drinks:

- the caffeine, high sugar content, and carbonation of energy drinks can interfere with hydration, making them a poor choice for staying hydrated during activity.
- energy drinks can have up to 180 milligrams (mg) of caffeine in a single serving container. One drink could have more caffeine than the maximum daily limit for youth.

Maximum Daily Limits for Caffeine

Adults	400 mg
Women of childbearing age	300 mg
10-12 years	85 mg
7-9 years	62.5 mg
4-6 years	45 mg

Source: Unlockfood.ca, 2019. *Facts on Caffeine*

Questions?

Contact Eat Great and Participate's Registered Dietitian mpark@recreationnl.com, or (709) 729-4490.

For more healthy eating resources, check out:

Eat Great and Participate: recreationnl.com/eat-great-participate

Canada's Food Guide: Canada.ca/FoodGuide

Half Your Plate: halfyourplate.ca