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Re-think Your Drink

With the coming of Spring, people naturally drink more beverages to accommodate for the heat. Many sweet beverages are little more than a sugar delivery systems and the extra calories are easy to miss. What you drink can make more of a difference than you think. Suppose you drink a can of sweetened soda every day. Over a week, that is more than 1,000 extra calories. Unless you burn those calories off with more activity each and every day, you will gain weight. How much? About 12 pounds a year!

Learn to carefully read the Nutrition Facts Label on beverages. The Label may give the calories for only part of the contents. A label on a 20-oz. bottle may list the number of calories in an 8-oz. serving even though the bottle contains 20 oz. or 2.5 servings. You need to look closely at the serving size when comparing the calorie content of different beverages.

There are high-calorie culprits in unexpected places. Coffee drinks and blended fruit smoothies sound innocent enough but the calories in some of your favorite coffee-shop or smoothie-stand items may surprise you. Check the website or in-store nutrition information for your favorite coffee or smoothie shop to find out how many calories are in different menu items. When a smoothie or coffee craving kicks in, try to minimize the caloric damage. Request that your drink be made with fat-free (skim) milk instead of whole milk. Order the smallest size available. Forgo the extra flavoring—the flavor syrups, like vanilla or hazelnut, are sugar-sweetened and will add calories to your drink. Skip the whip. The whipped cream on top of coffee drinks adds calories and fat. Get back to basics by ordering a plain cup of coffee with fat-free milk and artificial sweetener or drink it black. At the smoothie stand, order a child's size if available. Ask to see the nutrition information for each type of smoothie and pick the smoothie with the fewest calories. Many contain added sugar in addition to the sugar naturally in fruit, juice, or yogurt. Ask that your smoothie be prepared without added sugar; remember that the fruit is naturally sweet.

Sugar comes with all kinds of names; be familiar with the names and watch for them. Some common calorie sweeteners are: high-fructose corn syrup, fructose, fruit juice concentrate, honey, sugar, syrup, fructose, sucrose, and dextrose.

Remember not all drinks are created equal. They can add extra calories, fat and sugar to your daily diet. It is just as important to make wise choices with your drinks as it is with your other foods. Making a change in your beverage choices can provide your daily diet with more nutrition while cutting out the extra calories provided by beverages.



Have a question? Contact the University of Florida IFAS-Wakulla County Extension Office at 926-3931, week days 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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