

Juice Wars - The Best and Worst for Your Health

Presented by GISI's Wellness
Committee

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Juice Wars: What's In Your Glass?

Who doesn't enjoy a tall, cool glass of juice? The color is vibrant, the taste sweet, and it's good for you, too. Not so fast, say some dieticians. Although the best kinds of juice deliver a bounty of vitamins, the worst are hardly better than liquid candy. This presentation helps you spot the difference.



Choice: Vegetable Juice

Drinking your veggies is a convenient way to add powerful plant-based nutrients to your diet. The lycopene in tomato juice appears to lower the risk of prostate cancer. Beet juice may reduce blood pressure. Pulpy vegetable juice is also packed with fiber that can help control hunger. And all of these benefits come without a catch. Vegetable juice has far less sugar and fewer calories than the typical fruit juice.



Worst Choice: Juice "Cocktails"

Be on alert for the terms juice cocktail, juice-flavored beverage, or juice drink. Most of these products contain only small amounts of real juice. The main ingredients are usually water and some type of sugar, such as high-fructose corn syrup. Nutritionally, these drinks are similar to most soft drinks — rich in sugar and calories, but low in nutrients. Research suggests that sugary fruit drinks put kids at risk for obesity and related health problems.



The 100% Fruit Juice Dilemma

What about pure fruit juice with no added sweeteners? Such an innocent-sounding drink has sparked endless debate. No one disputes the fact that real fruit juice is loaded with vitamins and disease-fighting antioxidants. The problem is juice can also be naturally high in sugar and calories. A cup of pure apple juice can have as much sugar as some candy bars. That's why many experts recommend sticking to one serving per day.



Good Choice: Pomegranate Juice

If you're only going to drink one glass of juice each day, you want to make it a good one. So let's explore which juices offer the biggest nutritional payoff per sip. Pomegranate juice tops the list.

It's high in sugar and calories, but delivers an abundant dose of antioxidants. These substances appear to protect brain function and may ward off cancer. In one study, 8 ounces of pomegranate juice daily reduced the recurrence of prostate cancer.



Good Choice: Cranberry Juice

Cranberry juice is packed with vitamin C, which is vital to a healthy immune system. There is also evidence to support a folk remedy — drink unsweetened cranberry juice to reduce your risk of urinary tract infections.



Good Choice: Blueberry Juice

Animal studies suggest blueberries may keep the brain healthy and protect against age-related conditions, such as dementia and Alzheimer's disease. In one study, aging rats that ate a blueberry-rich diet had the mental capacity of younger rats. Many of the antioxidant properties of blueberries carry over to blueberry juice; so drink up to boost brain health.



Good Choice: Acai Berry Juice

Researchers have only begun looking into the health benefits of acai juice, which is made from a berry found in South America. But early studies are promising. Acai pulp appears to have a higher concentration of antioxidants than cranberries, blackberries, strawberries, or blueberries.



Good Choice: Cherry Juice

Besides delivering a wealth of antioxidants, some berry juices appear to have anti-inflammatory properties. According to one study, drinking cherry juice before and after your work-out can reduce exercise-induced muscle pain.



Good Choice: Red Grape Juice

We've all heard that red wine, in moderation, can be good for the heart. The same is true of red grape juice. The key is that wine and juice are made with the entire grape – seeds, skin, and all. When you eat fresh grapes, you miss out on nutrients hiding in the seeds.



Good Choice: Prune Juice

Another viable folk remedy, prune juice has long been recommended to relieve constipation. It works because it's extremely high in fiber and contains a natural laxative called sorbitol. But the benefits of prune juice don't stop there. The juice is also packed with antioxidants, iron, and potassium.



What About Orange Juice?

It's a staple at breakfast, but does this popular juice carry its weight? The good news is orange juice is loaded with vitamin C, a star for its immune-boosting benefits. In addition, orange juice is often fortified with calcium and vitamin D, nutrients that strengthen the bones. Unsweetened orange juice has fewer calories than some berry juices or grape juice. The trade-off is that it also has fewer antioxidants overall.



Kids & Juice

Most children love juice, but the American Academy of Pediatrics has set clear guidelines on how much is too much. For kids younger than 6, the AAP recommends no more than 4 to 6 ounces of pure fruit juice per day. For ages 7 to 18, the suggested amount is 8 to 12 ounces.



Water It Down

If you or your kids crave more than a single cup of juice per day, try watering it down. By mixing water and juice, you slash the calories in every serving. Instead of drinking one glass of pure juice, you can enjoy two or three cups of the water-juice mixture throughout the day.



Go for Whole Fruit

Dieticians say a great alternative to guzzling fruit juice is to eat the whole fruit. This provides fiber and additional nutrients from the flesh and pulp. Unlike juice, fresh berries or orange wedges also help control hunger.



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