

Daily drinks can pack in huge amount of invisible, empty calories



January 27, 2010 by [Barb Berggoetz](#) | Star staff

Let's say you had a medium cafe latte with whole milk with breakfast. Then you swig down a 20-ounce regular cola at lunch. A 16-ounce sweetened iced tea with lemon gets you through the afternoon slump. At dinner, you sip on 12 ounces of ginger ale.

That doesn't sound over the top, calorie-wise, does it? Well, think again.

Those four beverages amount to nearly 800 calories — or a whopping 40 percent of an average 2,000-calorie daily diet.

OK, so you don't drink regular soda. That's good, say local dietitians. But guzzle a large glass of orange or apple juice instead, and your calorie count is even higher.

Or throw in a Starbucks White Chocolate Mocha Frappuccino, and that alone piles on 410 calories. Then there's alcohol. Sure, a "light" beer can be 100 or fewer calories. But a margarita? That packs the calories of a Big Mac.

Drinking too many calories, especially with sugar-laden drinks, is all too common. That goes for anything from regular soda and Gatorade to sweetened iced tea, fruit juice and liquor.

"Most people really have no idea how much they consume from a calorie standpoint from their beverages," said Stacey Faryna, registered dietitian and owner of Midwest Wellness Solutions in Indianapolis.

Why not?

"They don't think (drinks) can have so many calories because they're liquid," said Angie Scheetz, registered dietitian and wellness coordinator for the National Institute for Fitness and Sport.

"It's always the very first thing I ask clients: 'What are you drinking?'"

Scheetz says she tells them that eliminating one soda with about 150 calories each day for a year can reduce their weight by 15 pounds. "That gets people's eyes open."

What's more, most drinks just don't fill you up.

"You tend to eat the exact same amount, whether you drink something with calories or without calories," said Scheetz. "You don't eat less if you drink more."

Some health-conscious people, like Peggy Edmondson, 59, and her husband, Jeff, Zionsville, who are avid hikers with the Indianapolis Hiking Club, have taken steps to reduce calories from beverages.

She switched to fat-free liquid creamer, instead of milk, in coffee and has just a half cup of juice in the morning. They drink a lot of water and iced tea, but she brews her own tea by the gallon with a half-cup of sugar, rather than using presweetened tea. He drinks it unsweetened.

"We would rather cut down on calories in beverages than food," she said. "We'd rather eat pie."

Dietitians say plenty of good low- or no-calorie choices exist — flavored, sparkling or soda water, black coffee, unsweetened tea, diluted or light juice, fat-free or skim milk — to help people stay hydrated with the recommended eight daily cups of fluid.

Drinks that Scheetz suggests avoiding most often are regular sodas, high-calorie coffee drinks with syrups and added sugar, and fruit juice that contains less than 100 percent juice.

A recent flap, though, has emerged over drinking 100 percent fruit juice, with some saying it poses the same obesity-related health risks as regular sodas. Dr. Charles Billington, an appetite researcher at the University of Minnesota, likens 100 percent fruit juice to sugar water and says people can do without it.

Jill Frame, a registered dietitian with the St. Francis Weight Loss Center, doesn't go quite that far, but offers precautions.

She says people need to realize that 100 percent juice is calorie-dense, with more calories per ounce than regular soda, and usually high fructose content.

A half-cup or 4 ounces, considered a serving for most juices, is all right, she said, but opting for whole fruit is better. For kids, she suggests milk or water in the morning.

"With juice, you are taking out the fiber and goodness and leaving behind the fruit sugar," said Frame.

But 100 percent juice is a nutritionally rich beverage and a valuable source of a lot of nutrients, including vitamin C, folate and potassium, says Sarah Wally, registered dietitian representing the Washington, D.C.-based Juice Products Association

She agrees people need to eat more whole fruits and vegetables, but says drinking moderate amounts of juice as a handy way to provide a fruit serving is a good option.

Photos



A single, 8-ounce glass of apple juice has the



Do this: Instead of a 12-ounce glass of nondiet calories, or seltzer water with a splash of 100



Do this: Drink sparkling water with natural (enough calories) from a vending machine. (Frank Esp

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Research has found mixed results. Some studies show a link between juice and weight gain, and others link juice to more healthful diets and lower weights in children.

Dr. Theresa Nicklas, professor of pediatrics with the Children's Nutrition Research Center at Baylor College of Medicine, said both of the center's studies of youth showed no association between 100 percent juice consumption and weight.

The juice association, Wally said, supports the American Academy of Pediatrics nutrition committee's recommendation that children ages 1 to 6 drink no more than 4 to 6 ounces a day and older kids have no more than 8 to 10 ounces.

One nutrient-rich option is juices made at home with a juicer or blender, although dietitians urge moderation, as the calories can add up. Renee Bogard, owner of Altered Body Mind Yoga Studio in Greenwood, is a big fan of juicing.

She also drinks brewed herbal green tea, a habit that has almost replaced her admitted addiction to Pepsi.

She regularly makes carrot juice with apples or with celery, parsley and garlic and also likes to make "green" smoothies, with coconut water, fresh pineapple, spinach and kale. The drinks have a ton of health benefits, she said.

"Juice first thing in the morning curbs my appetite, gives me plenty of energy and holds me over until noon," said Bogard.

Whatever you drink, Indiana University applied health sciences professor Alice Lindeman advises that you consciously think about what you're drinking, as well as eating, to avoid mindless consumption.

"You need to be aware and ask yourself why you're drinking," she said.

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