

Choosing Soft Drinks

Use this leaflet to help you understand soft drink descriptions and when to choose different types.

Drinks to be taken at anytime

Drinks that contain no or negligible amounts of sugar have little, or no effect on blood glucose. This includes water, sugar-free diluting squash and diet or 'zero' fizzy drinks.

Sugar-free or diet drinks

These drinks contain no, or very little, sugar and will not affect your blood glucose. They can be taken with or between meals. However, diet fizzy drinks can still damage your teeth – follow the 'tooth kind' messages at the end of this leaflet to limit damage.

No-added-sugar or unsweetened

Drinks described as 'no-added-sugar' or 'unsweetened' do not have sugar as an added ingredient. However, they may contain carbohydrate in naturally occurring sugars such as fructose or lactose. Always check the label to see how much carbohydrate these drinks contain.

Drinks containing carbohydrate

You can choose drinks containing carbohydrate as snacks or with a meal. Always remember to count the carbohydrate and take bolus insulin to cover what you drink.

Fruit juice and smoothies

Fruit contains a natural sugar called fructose. Fructose is absorbed much more quickly from fruit juice and fruit smoothies than from whole fruit. This can make it difficult to match their carbohydrate content with insulin if they are taken on their own. Therefore, fruit juice should only be taken in small amounts with meals (100-150ml).

Milk and yoghurt drinks

Milk and yoghurt contain a natural sugar called lactose. Drinks made with milk or yoghurt, contain carbohydrate. This includes milkshakes, yoghurt drinks/smoothies, hot chocolate, malted drinks, lattes, mochas and any milky coffee and tea.

Drinks to avoid

Drinks with added sugar

Drinks with added sugar contain up to five teaspoons per serving, and can cause problems with blood glucose, weight and teeth. You should avoid drinks with added sugar.

- Fizzy drinks like cola, lemonade or orangeade
- Iced drinks including fruit slush, Slush Puppy and Fruitina
- Squash with added sugar such as barley water and hi-juice
- Fruit drinks with added sugar such as Five Alive and Capri Sun

Reduced-sugar

Reduced-sugar drinks contain 25% less sugar than the full-sugar variety. These drinks are not sugar-free, cause your blood glucose to rise and should generally be avoided.

Energy drinks

Energy drinks typically contain sugar, caffeine and other ingredients to increase energy. Their high-sugar content can affect blood glucose and lead to weight gain. The high caffeine content of some varieties is not suitable for younger children – even sugar-free varieties should be avoided.

Sports drinks

Sports drinks such as Lucozade Sport, Powerade or Gatorade, can sometimes be useful before, during or after exercise. However, they contain added sugar so are best avoided as a normal drink.

Teeth

Sipping any drinks other than water continuously is not good for your teeth. Remember to follow 'tooth kind' messages.

- Brush your teeth at least twice a day.
- Drink more water.
- Try to only take soft drinks and fruit juices with a straw and with a meal or snack.

Supporting patient care nationwide

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