

Sip Smart!™ Ontario Newsletter Inserts

Use the Sip Smart!™ Ontario newsletter inserts to share important facts about healthy drink choices with your school and community members. Please use resources in their entirety.

Newsletter topics:

1. Are too many sugary drinks affecting your child's health?
2. Why are sugary drinks not good for your children's teeth?
3. Can sports drinks help your child perform better?
4. Kids don't need caffeine!
5. How much sugar is safe for my child to have?
6. Is it okay for my child to have 'diet' pop instead of sugary drinks?
7. What's the difference between 100% fruit juice and a fruity drink?
8. How can I know if sugar is added to my children's drinks?
9. Are energy drinks safe for children?

1. Are too many sugary drinks affecting your child's health?

What children drink each day has a major impact on their health. Drinking fewer sugary drinks is key for good nutrition, healthy teeth and a healthy weight in growing children.

Families play an important role in the choices children make. Decreasing the number of sugary drinks will help your child to be healthy. YOU can help your child make good drink choices.

Sip Smart!™ Ontario is an initiative designed to teach children in Grades 3 to 7 what they need to know to make healthy drink choices.

The Sip Smart!™ Ontario resources are fun and interactive. Families can find them online at www.brightbites.ca

2. Why are sugary drinks not good for your children's teeth?

Regular intake of sugary drinks can increase your child's risk of cavities. Soft drinks (both regular and diet versions), lemonades and citrus fruit juices, are acidic and can erode the outer surface of the teeth. This makes the enamel thinner and the tooth more prone to decay.

Try these tips to keep your child's teeth healthy:

- Serve water to quench thirst.
- Offer plain (unflavoured) lower fat milk or fortified soy beverage with meals.
- Avoid buying drinks with added sugars.
- Read the ingredient list to check for added sugars. Other words for added sugar include sucrose, glucose-fructose, dextrose, syrups or fruit juice from concentrate.
- Limit 100% juice to 125 mL (1/2 cup) per day.

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3. Can sports drinks help your child perform better?

Sports drinks are a popular sugary drink that many believe help children perform well at sporting events. Not true!

Sports drinks are **not needed** by most children. Having regular water breaks every 15 – 20 minutes, and enjoying water and a healthy snack after a game or workout is adequate.

Children might need small amounts of sports drinks if they:

- Do prolonged, vigorous physical activity in hot, humid conditions for more than 60 minutes or,
- Wear heavy protective gear such as hockey gear, which can increase sweating and reduce the evaporation of sweat to cool the child.

For the typical child doing routine physical activity for less than three hours in normal weather conditions, the use of sports drinks in place of water is unnecessary. And think: just 2 cups (500 mL) of a typical sports drink has over 7 tsp of sugar. That's more than half their maximum daily intake of added sugars!

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4. Kids don't need caffeine!

Even low levels of caffeine can affect the way your child feels because children's bodies are smaller and their brains are still developing.

Health professionals suggest that children aged 7 to 9 years get no more than 62.5 mg of caffeine per day, and children 10 to 12 years get no more than 85 mg of caffeine each day.

A can (355 mL) of cola or root beer has 40 mg of caffeine while a cup (250 mL) of coffee can have 150 mg or more.

Limit drinks with caffeine such as soft drinks (cola and some non-cola brands), chocolate, coffee, tea, chocolate milk and iced mocha drinks. Energy drinks and some brands of vitamin-fortified water also have caffeine.

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5. How much sugar is safe for my child to have?

Free sugars are the sugars added to foods during processing and preparation, plus the naturally occurring sugars in honey, syrups and fruit juices.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation recommends that adults and children consume no more than 10% of their total energy (calories) as free sugars. For students in grades 3-7 that means approximately no more than 10 tsp (50 mL) per day. This is a guideline only. The number would change slightly based on the student's age, gender and activity level.

10 tsp sugar = 10 sugar cubes = 10 sugar packs = 40 g of sugar

Note that this includes the added sugar in food AND drinks! So, if a child has one 355 mL can of pop, which contains 10 - 12 teaspoons of sugar, he/she has reached the **maximum** amount of free sugar for one day.

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6. Is it okay for my child to have 'diet' pop instead of sugary drinks?

Drinks sweetened with artificial sweeteners (e.g., stevia, aspartame, sucralose, saccharin) are not healthy alternatives to sugary drinks for school aged children and should be avoided.

'Diet' drinks contain none of the nutrients that a child's growing body needs to be healthy and strong. Just like sugary drinks, drinking artificially sweetened drinks gets children used to sweet-tasting, non-nutritious items. The high level of acidity in these drinks can lead to tooth erosion and decay. All they do is bump healthy food and drinks out of your child's diet!

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7. What's the difference between 100% fruit juice and a fruity drink?

- Unlike fruity drinks, 100% fruit juice has only fruit juice and some of the natural vitamin C found in fruit. Unsweetened 100% fruit juice is the best choice.
- Limit juice to ½ cup (125 mL) per day. A small tetra-pak of juice is 200 mL. Juice still has natural sugars, which have the same effect on teeth and overall health as other sugary drinks. Eating a whole piece of fruit is more filling, with the same great taste and some fiber too.
- Fruity drinks labelled 'punches', 'splash', 'beverage', or 'cocktails' are made with water, added sugar, flavouring and often only a small amount of fruit juice. Don't be fooled by the colourful fruit pictures on the container. Fruity drinks are not an alternative to eating fruit or drinking 100% juice!

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8. How can I know if sugar is added to my children's drinks?

Added sugar is a major ingredient in many popular drinks. Nutrition labels can help us make healthy drink choices. To know if sugar has been added read the ingredient list.

These words on the ingredient list mean sugar has been added: sugar, brown sugar, cane sugar, beet sugar, sugar/glucose-fructose, dextrose, fructose, high fructose corn syrup,

glucose, maltose, sucrose, fruit juice concentrates, honey, molasses, maltodextrin, agave syrup, malt syrup, maple syrup, syrup.

Choose drinks that contain no added sugar.

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9. Are energy drinks safe for children?

Energy drinks are NOT healthy or safe for children. Energy drinks typically have water, caffeine, taurine (an amino acid), vitamins, herbal ingredients and sugar or artificial sweeteners.

Children can get too much caffeine very easily by drinking energy drinks. Too much caffeine can disturb their sleep and can make them anxious or jittery. Just 1 cup (250 mL) of an energy drink has almost the same amount of caffeine as 3 cans of cola.

Most energy drinks are high in sugar – 10 tsp in a 355 mL can. To ‘energize’ children naturally offer healthy foods, and water to quench thirst. Encourage regular physical activity and a good night’s sleep.

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