

# Today's Dietitian

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## The New Proposed Healthy Beverage Guidelines

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### CAN I GET YOU A DRINK?

Beverages are clearly “hot” in the United States. Advertisements for thirst quenchers battle for recognition with celebrity endorsements and eye-catching campaigns. From soft drinks, sports drinks, flavored water, 100% fruit juices, and fortified juices to assorted teas, gourmet coffees, milk products and alternatives, smoothies, alcohol, vegetable juices, and fruit drinks and blends, Americans have many choices to fill their glasses, mugs, or bottles. Concern surrounding this list of selections grows as concomitant increases are seen in body weight, chronic disease, and calories from sweetened beverages.

The Nationwide Food Consumption Survey collected in 1977-1978, 1989-1991, and 1994-1996 was reviewed to assess the trends in beverage consumption through the years.<sup>3</sup> Data analysis showed that Americans have an alarming penchant for soda or fruit drinks and a lesser interest in milk in all age groups. Between 1977 and 2001, the percentage of total calories from soft drinks rose from 2.8% to 7% while milk slipped from 8% to 5% (without impact from choosing a lower fat milk option). Between 1977 and 1996, there was an increase in calories from sweetened beverages from 70 to 141 calories per day. When reviewed for the proportion consumed of each food group, sweetened beverages showed an increase of 15% while milk declined by 12% between 1977 and 1996. Number of servings of sweetened beverages consumed climbed from 1.96 in 1977 to 2.39 in 1996, with serving sizes significantly expanding across the board from home

to restaurant for sweetened refreshments. Altogether, Americans are consuming nearly 21% of their total calories from beverages.<sup>3</sup>

### GOT WATER?

Aside from special situations such as extreme heat, physical exertion, pregnancy, or lactation, most sedentary people can meet their hydration needs through foods and fluids. Based on fluid balance and water turnover studies, and in agreement with the findings from the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III), adult males and females can remain hydrated with approximately 3.7 liters and 2.7 liters from food and fluid, respectively.<sup>4</sup> As a result, these values have been named the adequate intake level for water consumption.<sup>4</sup> When combined with the foods consumed, water can hydrate an individual sufficiently. Nevertheless, as established, people are choosing a variety of beverages over water.

A review of the NHANES data from 1999 to 2001 assessed the impact of opting or not for water on overall drinking and eating patterns.<sup>5</sup> Dietary interviews from 4,755 individuals over the age of 18 were analyzed to estimate water consumption and usual calorie and beverage intake. Results showed an average water consumption of 1.54 liters per day, with 88% reporting that they consumed water as a beverage. Interestingly, differences in soft drink consumption were found between those reporting they consumed water as a beverage and those who denied it. Forty-five percent of those reporting water as a common drink and 63% of those avoiding

Thanks to MyPyramid and the Dietary Guidelines, consumers have the tools to develop a dietary strategy. But, they have received less guidance about the beverages they drink. Fluid consumption has remained focused on the importance of water for hydration, and much debate has emerged regarding solid recommendations. Dietitians and health-care professionals advise against over-consuming sugary beverages such as soft drinks and fruit-flavored beverages and emphasize the importance of low-fat milk, but guidelines outlining where drinks fit in a day's intake have been lacking—until now. In a recent issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, researchers proposed a guidance system for healthy beverage consumption.<sup>1</sup>

In response to the growing obesity epidemic and documented increase in the percentage of total calories being consumed, a panel of experts convened to devise a plan for Americans. The Beverage Guidance Panel was assembled under the leadership of Barry M. Popkin, PhD, director of the Interdisciplinary Obesity Center and Division of Nutrition Epidemiology, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, to review the literature and create a guide to help consumers make healthy beverage selections.<sup>2</sup> This was especially pertinent as beverage choices abound in advertisements, grocery shelves, vending machines, and food establishments.

the tap consumed soft drinks. Water consumers also said they include fruit juices (29%) while only 17% of the non-water consumers said they sip fruit juices. On the flip side, water consumers reported consuming more milk (49%) compared with 38% of non-water consumers. Despite the additional calories from dairy, those who drank water had lower calorie intakes (2,188 kilocalories to the 2,382 kilocalories for non-water drinkers), reflecting a significant 9% difference. The influence water consumption has on overall intake remains unfinished business, but this evaluation supports the need for guidance and investigation into how fluid affects dietary choices and health.<sup>5</sup>

### HEALTHY DRINKING: GUIDANCE PROPOSED

Citing the increase in unhealthy weight and simultaneous rise in calorie intake as motivating factors, Popkin et al appraised the research to develop beverage consumption guidelines.<sup>1</sup> Recognizing that water can cover an individual's fluid needs but that Americans enjoy sipping a variety of fluids, the researchers created categories with maximum recommended servings per day. Beverage categories were evaluated based on possible health benefits or risks, with careful consideration given to their relative calorie and/or nutrient contribution. The researchers sought to give consumers choices while emphasizing calorie control.

The following outlines recommendations to stay below 10% of total calories consumed from beverages for a 2,200 kilocalorie diet.<sup>1</sup>

#### Level 1: Water

Recommended Servings: 50 fluid ounces (1.7 liters) per day

It is important to note that these recommendations for water may vary with activity and environment. Christopher R. Mohr, PhD, RD, president of Mohr Results ([www.Mohrresults.com](http://www.Mohrresults.com)), cautions, "Active folks and athletes require more water, especially in environmental extremes as heat and humidity." In addition, sports drinks, like their name implies, are designed for athletes. Therefore, Mohr says consumption of sports drinks will increase for ac-

tive people as well.

#### Level 2: Tea or Coffee, unsweetened

Recommended Servings: 0 to 40 fluid ounces (0 to 1.4 liters) per day

\*Up to 400 milligrams of caffeine per day

According to Mohr, "Tea and coffee are both calorie-free beverages that provide antioxidants and help hydrate the body as well." Mohr says there are many options for consumers. "Tea can be enjoyed both hot and cold, and products such as Lipton are offered in a variety of [noncalorie] flavors." Of course, it's important to remember that adding ingredients such as milk, cream, and sugar to tea or coffee can add a significant amount of calories and fat, so it is best when both are plain.

#### Level 3: Low-fat and skim milk and soy beverages

Recommended Servings: 0 to 16 fluid ounces (0 to 0.5 liters) per day

D. Milton Stokes, MPH, RD, spokesperson for the American Dietetic Association and owner of One Source Nutrition, LLC, calls low-fat and skim milk a "nutrient powerhouse." Not only is it a good source of calcium, but Stokes says, "it provides ample protein, good carbs, and an array of vitamins and minerals. It's great alone, in a smoothie, or over cereal."

#### Level 4: Noncalorically sweetened beverages

Recommended Servings: 0 to 32 fluid ounces (0 to 1 liters) per day

Diet drinks are an option for people looking for flavor without calories. Jennie McCary, MS, RD, LD, wellness coordinator for the Albuquerque Public Schools, says, "Substituting a noncalorie sweetened beverage for a sugar-laden treat can save many calories throughout the day. One diet drink consumed for a regular soft drink (12 ounces) can save the drinker 150 calories—or 1,050 calories per week." The FDA notes that artificial sweeteners can be consumed in moderation with little health risk (see [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) for more information on artificial sweeteners).

#### Level 5: Calorie beverages with some nutrients (eg, 100% fruit juices, 0 to 1 alcohol for women, 0 to 2 for men, whole milk, sports drinks)

Recommended Servings: 0 to 8 fluid ounces per day

When choosing a beverage with calories, Stokes encourages his clients to look for the beverage with the most bang. "I encourage clients to look for the most phytochemicals and micronutrients," he adds. "Choose the 100% fruit juices like cranberry, apple, and orange juice, or be adventurous and look for 100% blueberry and cherry juices."

#### Level 6: Calorically sweetened beverages

Recommended Servings: 0 to 8 fluid ounces per day

While fun and refreshing, the calories from sweetened beverages provide little else. "Moderation, moderation, moderation," repeats Stokes. "It's about enjoying the food you eat, as well as the beverages you drink, while staying within your healthy calorie and nutrient goals."

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#### For More Information

Beverage Intake in the United States:  
[www.beverageguidancepanel.org](http://www.beverageguidancepanel.org)  
Proposed guidance system graphic:  
[www.lipton.com/tea\\_health/beverage\\_guide/index.asp](http://www.lipton.com/tea_health/beverage_guide/index.asp)

#### REFERENCES

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