Think about your drink

**Drink Choices**

# Imagine this: you are out and about on a hot day. You are thirsty and have forgotten your reusable water bottle. You head into the corner store to see what drinks are on offer. There are a lot of options! Which one do you choose?

# We could group the drinks in the fridge into five categories:

# Water

# Sweet drinks

# Sports drinks

# Caffeinated drinks

# Milk or milk substitutes.

# Water is the best drink and is what we should choose most often. But why is water a better choice than the other four categories of drinks?

# Sweet drinks

Sweet drinks include fruit juice and fruit drinks, regular soft drinks, cordial, flavoured mineral water and artificially sweetened or low calorie soft drinks (those marketed as ‘zero’, ‘diet’ or ‘lite’). These drinks contain large amounts of sugar or artificial sugar and do not have much nutritional value. Fruit juice has more nutrients (such as vitamin C) but can have almost as much sugar as soft drink.

Drinking sweet drinks regularly can lead to poor dental health and tooth decay due to high sugar and acidity of these drinks. Sweet drinks also contain lots of energy. If this energy isn’t used by being active, it can lead to weight gain in the longer term.

While drinks with artificial sugar do not generally contain lots of energy, this doesn’t mean they should be routinely included in your diet. These drinks can increase your preference for sweet food and drinks and are still highly acidic.

If you do choose a sweet drink, choose 99% or 100% fruit juice and drink it in small amounts.

# Sports drinks

Sports drinks are designed for athletes who are performing at a very high level. They have carbohydrates and electrolytes added to fuel bodies and replace electrolyte losses. Advertising of sports drinks can give the impression that they are useful for anyone.

Unless you are exercising strenuously in hot conditions, water is still the best choice. For most people, sports drinks contribute unnecessary energy and salt to their diet. Like sweet drinks, they can also impact on dental health, due to sugar and acidity.

Refill your water bottle from the tap when you are being active. You will be doing the environment a favour and saving your money for something more important.

# Caffeinated drinks

Caffeine is a stimulant found in drinks such as coffee, tea, cola-flavoured soft drinks and energy drinks. It can be safely consumed in small amounts but in larger amounts can lead to anxiety, insomnia, dehydration and fatigue. It affects everyone differently. The way you feel after drinking caffeine will depend on your size, health, the amount you have consumed and how used to drinking caffeine you are.

Commercial caffeinated drinks often have a lot of sugar in them, which means they will have the same impact on your body as sweet drinks.

You may be tempted to drink caffeinated drinks when feeling tired after a late night or an early start to the day. In late puberty, a young person’s body tends to secrete the sleep hormone melatonin later in the day than in younger children. This can make it difficult to get to sleep and wake up. Drinking caffeine to deal with this will generally only lead to you feeling more tired the next day. It will also impact on the quality of your sleep.

There is no set rule for when it is ‘safe’ to start drinking caffeine, but it is best to avoid while you are still growing as it can impact on your growth.

# Milk and milk substitutes

This category includes plain cow’s milk and dairy-free milks which may be made from soy, rice, oats or nuts. Smoothies and flavoured milks can also be in this category but can contain added sugar.

Plain milk is the best choice as it does not have any added sugar and is a good source of calcium, which is important for building strong bones. If you drink a dairy-free alternative, choose one fortified with calcium. Aim for at least 100mg of calcium per 100mL.

Keep water as your main drink but milk is also a good choice.

**For More Information:**

[The Department of Health Australia's Healthy Bodies Need Healthy Drinks Resource Package](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/sugar-drinks-toc)[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. <https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/publications/publishing.nsf/Content/sugar-drinks-toc> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)