WHAT SHOULD I DRINK?!
YOUR GUIDE TO LIQUID NUTRITION

Use this handy chart to make better beverage choices and develop healthy drinking habits—no matter what your starting point.

1 KNOW YOUR BEVERAGES

No need to label any drinks "off limits," but nutritional value does vary. Here's how different beverages stack up, and why you may want to drink some more often than others.

DRINK MORE | DRINK SOME | DRINK LESS

PLAIN WATER

DRINK MORE

- Spring water
- Tap water
- Alkaline water
- Distilled water
- Filtered water
- Reverse osmosis water

"Eight glasses of water a day" isn't supported by scientific evidence, but it's still a reasonably good rule of thumb. Get a healthy amount of water by:

- Drinking when you're thirsty
- Sipping, not guzzling
- Having a glass or two of water with meals
- Remembering that all types of water (plain, sweetened, carbonated) count towards your water intake

All plain water is good for you, but filtering water removes substances that could negatively impact health, such as heavy metals, radon, pesticides, and microplastics.

SWEETENED BEVERAGES

DRINK MORE | DRINK SOME | DRINK LESS

- Infused water
- Naturally flavored water
- Vegetable juice
- Artifically sweetened water
- Fruit juice
- Juice drinks

Try adding berries, citrus fruits, herbs, and/or ginger to your water to infuse it with natural flavor.

Vegetable juice is fine in small amounts, but eating whole vegetables is preferable because they contain more nutrients and fiber, and are more filling.

It's okay to drink some fruit juice, but it's likely best to limit to less than 1 glass per day, since it contains more sugar, less fiber, and less nutrients than whole fruit.

CARBONATED BEVERAGES

DRINK MORE | DRINK SOME | DRINK LESS

- Carbonated water, unsweetened
- Carbonated water, naturally flavored
- Diet soda
- Carbonated water, artificially sweetened
- Energy drinks, artificially sweetened
- Soda (pop)
- Tonic water
- Energy drinks, sweetened

Carbonated and infused waters are generally quite healthy, but their lower pH levels may be harmful to tooth enamel when consistently consumed in large amounts. Up to 1 liter/day is safe for most. Carbonated beverages is a reasonable benchmark.

Beverages with artificial and low-calorie sweeteners are fine to consume in moderate amounts (around 8-16 ounces/day).

Research shows that consuming 3.5 mg/kg body weight of caffeine 30-60 minutes before exercise can improve athletic performance. But use wisely: This amount can also cause jitteriness.

Soda and sweetened energy drinks contribute more sugar to the average diet than any other food or drinks. If you're drinking a lot from this category, make improving towards "drink some" a priority.

Did you know that tonic water has roughly as much sugar as soda?

TEA & COFFEE

DRINK MORE | DRINK SOME | DRINK LESS

- Tea, plain
- Coffee, plain
- Tea, lightly sweetened and/or creamed
- Coffee, lightly sweetened and/or creamed
- Tea, heavily sweetened and/or creamed
- Coffee, heavily sweetened and/or creamed

Tea contains a host of health-promoting substances.

Black tea: Rich in theaflavins and thearubigins; strongly associated with decreased stroke risk

Green tea: Rich in catechins (especially EGCG) and may lower your risk of several cancers

White tea: The least processed type of tea, so it retains the most antioxidants

Herbal teas: Caffeine-free, packed with antioxidants, and available in a variety of natural flavors

Benefits of coffee:

- Caffeine may boost alertness, physical performance, and reaction time
- Regular drinkers may have lower risk of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's
- Contains antioxidants and is associated with overall decreased risk of cancer

When you drink caffeinated coffee or tea:

- Limit total consumption of the two to 5 cups/60 ounces (1200 ml) per day.
- Ask yourself how you feel physically, mentally, and emotionally a few hours afterwards... as well as if you miss your daily dose.

Downsides of coffee:

- "Slow metabolizers" of caffeine may experience increased blood pressure, disrupted sleep, or worse PMS symptoms.
- Too much caffeine can stimulate anxiety and disrupt sleep

So plain if possible. Cream, sugar, and other additives reduce potential health benefits by adding calories and artificial sweeteners and flavors. **"Plain" doesn't have to be boring, though. There are still plenty of "drink more" options.**

Drip coffee | Pour over | French press | Americano | Espresso | Cold brew | Iced coffee | Instant coffee | Yerba Mate | Matcha tea | Iced tea | Black tea | Oolong tea | Green tea | White tea | Kombucha | Tulsi tea | Rooibos tea | Chamomile tea | Peppermint tea

DAIRY & PLANT MILKS

DRINK MORE | DRINK SOME | DRINK LESS

- Kefir, plain
- Kefir, flavored/ sweetened
- Plant milks, unsweetened
- Dairy milk, plain
- Milkshakes
- Plant milks, sweetened
- Dairy milk, flavored

Fermented drinks (like kefir and kombucha) contain probiotics and other bioactive compounds, which may improve your digestion and nutrient absorption.

If environmental sustainability is your top priority, categorize dairy milk and resource-intensive plant milks as "drink less."

If you're struggling to gain lean mass or stay very active, it may be beneficial to place sweetened milks in the "drink some" category.

When it comes to plant milks, choose unsweetened when possible. **For variety, consider trying:**

Rice milk | Oat milk | Soy milk | Coconut milk | Hemp milk | Almond milk | Pea milk

RECOVERY & PERFORMANCE DRINKS

DRINK MORE | DRINK SOME | DRINK LESS

- Super Shakes
- Protein shakes
- Sports drinks, lightly or artificially sweetened
- Coconut water
- Fruit juice smoothies
- Sports drinks, sweetened

Limit Super Shakes to one or two daily. Otherwise, they start to displace solid meals. Never heard of a Super Shake? Check out https://www.precisionnutrition.com/super-shake-creation-infographic

Coconut water can be a fine recovery drink after lots of perspiration, but it does contain calories and sugar. Look for versions without added sugar.

Consider sports drinks in the "drink some" category during training or even the "drink more" category during competition.

ALCOHOL

DRINK LESS

- Beer: 5% alcohol; 1 serving = 12 ounces
- Wine: 12% alcohol; 1 serving = 5 ounces
- Fortified wine (sherry, port): 18% alcohol; 1 serving = 3 ounces
- Hard liquor: 40% alcohol; 1 serving = 1.5 ounces

The truth: No one knows whether drinking any amount of alcohol is actually good for us. And too much alcohol is absolutely harmful.

Here's how to play it safe:

- Drink alcohol moderately.
- If you don't already drink alcohol, don't start.
- Try going without alcohol for two weeks. If you can't, you may not be drinking in moderation.

What does "drinking moderately" mean?

	Women	Men
Drinks per week	Up to 7	Up to 14
Maximum drinks/day	3	4

To learn more about alcohol, check out https://www.precisionnutrition.com/quit-drinking

2 CHOOSE DRINKS BASED ON YOUR GOALS

The amount you drink from each section will depend on what you drink now, and what your goals are. Aim to get a little bit better; you don't have to do a complete overhaul.

"drink more" | "drink some" | "drink less"

THESE PROPORTIONS MAY WORK FOR YOU IF...

- Most of your drinks currently fall into the red category
- You're new to exercise or exercise intensity
- You want to look, feel, and perform better than you do now
- Most of your drinks currently fall into the red and yellow categories
- You exercise moderately or are training for an event like a half-marathon
- You want to look, feel, and perform a little better than average
- Most of your drinks currently fall into the yellow and green categories
- You're training for a major athletic event, like an ultramarathon
- You want above-average health, body composition, or athletic performance
- All of your drinks currently fall into the green and yellow categories
- You're preparing for a bodybuilding or elite athletic competition
- You're paid for your bodyfat/ looks or performance

A DAILY DRINK INTAKE THAT WORKS FOR MOST

Drinking just water, coffee, and tea is great, but it isn't your only option. If you want to enjoy more variety, here's a framework for balancing your choices without overdoing it.

Alcohol / Juice / Soda
12 ounces, Range: 0-12 ounces/day

Dairy or Plant Milk, unsweetened
16 ounces, Range: 0-24 ounces

Tea or Coffee, unsweetened or lightly sweetened
24 ounces, Range: 0-40 ounces

Waters
48 ounces, Range: 20-64 ounces

3 ADJUST FOR YOUR PREFERENCES AND LIFESTYLE

Context matters. Your red, yellow, and green lists will be unique to you. Use the below tools and guidelines to make your own personal spectrum.

CREATE YOUR OWN SPECTRUM

Green drinks I like or want to try:	Yellow drinks I want to incorporate:	Red drinks I want to indulge in:
1	1	1
2	2	2
3	3	
4		

HOW TO ADD BEVERAGES TO THE SPECTRUM

At some point, you're going to want to drink something that isn't on our lists. Or move drinks around to better suit your needs. (For example, you're an athlete who needs to consume sports drinks more often.) Here's how to decide where they fit.

FIRST, CONSIDER HOW IT HELPS YOU REACH YOUR GOALS. WILL THIS DRINK:

+ Make your body, performance, and/or recovery better?

OR

− Make your body, performance, and/or recovery worse?

THEN, ASK:

How processed is this drink?

Does it have added sugar or fat? Or artificial sweeteners?

How do I feel mentally and physically when I drink this beverage?

WITH THIS INFORMATION, DETERMINE ITS PLACE ON THE SPECTRUM.

IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Remember, just because a drink falls in the red or yellow sections doesn't mean it's forbidden.

Make drink choices based on your goals and current habits.

Don't worry about completely revamping drinking habits overnight.

Find a balance that works for you.

For the full article explaining this infographic, visit: www.precisionnutrition.com/what-should-drink-infographic

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