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Juice TO YOUR HEALTH

Looking for a way to "squeeze" more fruits and vegetables into your diet? Adding a little juice is one delicious, easy way to ensure you get the nutrients your body needs.

Commercially produced juices have a reputation for containing large quantities of added sugar and preservatives that essentially override any nutritional benefit a juice may have. When consumed in large quantities, juices such as this can lead to weight gain. Sold primarily as "healthy" beverages, it's become all too easy for people to misinterpret what they are putting into their bodies. A good example of this could be store-bought orange juice. While many orange juice products are fortified with beneficial vitamins, the high sugar content per serving makes eating an orange in its whole form, far more beneficial. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans calls for most of our fruit intake to come from whole fruit rather than juice, for more fiber.



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>
> REGISTERED DIETICIAN CHRISTINA REITER

Having said that, with some careful selection, drinking fruit juice can be very beneficial, particularly for those who find it difficult to incorporate fruits and vegetables into their diet. In a report published by the USDA, it was found that 85 percent of our nation's children and 60 percent of adults do not meet +5 A Day recommendations for fruits and vegetables. Studies show that adding more fruits and vegetables to one's diet can help prevent osteoporosis, reduce risk of stroke and cardiovascular disease, lower blood pressure, reduce the risk of cancer and prevent coronary heart disease.

Local Registered Dietician Christina Reiter feels that juice may be a nutritious option for people looking for a naturally sweet beverage. "We see products labeled as having "natural sugar" to distinguish them from other sweeteners such as high-fructose corn syrup or non-nutritive, artificial sweeteners, which are linked with consumer concern regarding long-term health," she says. Reiter recommends staying away from juices that contain added sugars or artificial sweeteners and evaluating one's food and beverage intake as a whole. "As far as what type of juice is healthiest, I simply go for 100-percent juice and variety," advises Reiter. The Harvard School of health also recommends limiting juice intake to one small glass per day, about four to six ounces, due to juice's high-calorie content.

Naked Juice, a popular juice brand whose slogan is "nothing to hide" is very proud of their "no added sugar" policy. All the sugars you find in the product are naturally occurring sugars found in the fruits themselves. Each juice or smoothie is marketed as having its own special health or lifestyle benefit. For example, the Red Machine 100-percent smoothie promises to make you invincible, helping to revive, renew and maintain immunity with its supercharged fruits.

One fruit that's received a lot of attention recently for being a highly nutritious "superfruit" is the acai berry. This Brazilian fruit is similar in appearance to a blueberry except it's 500 percent higher in antioxidants and contains calcium, iron, essential





amino acids and omega fats, critical for optimal health and to reduce the risk of many diseases.

Zola uses 100-percent unfiltered acai pulp as the base fruit in each of their delicious fruit juices. Certified Organic, Zola uses only ingredients free of pesticides, including organic Guarana seed for a natural energy boost. Zola does contain some added sugar in the form of organic evaporated cane juice. However, the producers of Zola do point out that Zola is low-glycemic, which is good. With a balanced nutritional profile of proteins, healthful fats and carbohydrates, Zola won't cause blood sugar to spike.

Another widely available juice worthy of your interest is V8 V-Fusion. This 100-percent juice product is particularly beneficial as it supplies a full serving of vegetables plus a full serving of fruit in every 8-oz glass. For most people vegetables are commonly the most difficult to incorporate into the diet. V-Fusion comes in five delicious flavors: Pomegranate Blueberry, Strawberry Banana, Peach Mango, Tropical Orange and Açai Mixed Berry, all of which contain a wide variety of vegetables but with all the taste you would expect from a fruit juice.

The majority of store-bought juice products are pasteurized to kill any harmful bacteria and to extend the shelf life. Traditional pasteurization does benefit the consumer, reducing risk of foodborne illness but, unfortunately, pasteurization often destroys flavor as well as the nutritional content of the fruits used. Today most juice companies prefer to use a flash-pasteurization process also called "high temperature-short time" processing, which helps to preserve the flavor and nutrient value within the juice.

While many store-bought juices do offer real nutritional benefit, it is important to recognize that there is no substitute for fresh whole fruit. Dr. Ron Spallone, a local complementary and alternative medicine practitioner, believes that there is an inherent wisdom in the chemical makeup of the plant foods we eat, "Wisdom in mother nature cannot be duplicated in a bottle," says Spallone. Therefore, whenever possible we should eat fruits and vegetables in their whole form or consider fresh squeezing fruits and vegetables at home to receive the maximum health benefits they supply. D

A JUICE A DAY KEEPS THE DOCTOR AWAY!

For more information about the juices featured in this story visit:

nakedjuice.com

zolaacai.com

v8juice.com

WHERE TO BUY

Naked Juice: 120-170 cal per 8-oz serving. Flavors vary by stores, available at Whole Foods, Target, King Soopers and Safeway. Retails for $3 and $5 for a 15.2-oz bottle.

Zola: 95-125 cal per 8-oz serving. Available at Whole Foods, King Soopers and Vitamin Shoppe. Retails for $2.99 for a 12-oz bottle.

V8 V-Fusion: 110-120 cal per 8-oz serving. Available at King Soopers, Safeway and Target in a 12- or 46-oz bottle. Price ranges from $1.69 to $3.99, depending on the size.