

Common Sugary Drink Myths

“Fruit drinks are healthy (or at least healthier than soda).”

Fruit drinks often have nearly as many calories as soda, and have 10% or less juice, meaning that the main ingredient in them is added sugar. Even smaller products, like juice pouches, contain too much added sugar: just one 6-ounce Capri Sun pouch provides 107% of the added sugar a 4-year-old should have in a whole day. A 6.8-ounce Kool-Aid Jammers drink contains more sugar than the same amount of Coca-Cola Classic.

“Children need fruit drinks to get enough vitamin C.”

Children can get Vitamin C from a variety of whole food sources such as strawberries, oranges, watermelon, kiwi, broccoli, and red bell peppers. Fruit is the best source of this vitamin. If children eat foods high in vitamin C almost every day, they don't need it from juice or fruit drinks. However, if you do choose to give your child a drink that has Vitamin C, 4 ounces of 100% juice is a better choice than a fruit drink.

“Children need sports drinks after physical activity.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics says that there is no need for children to drink sports drinks for physical activity. Water provides enough hydration and is the best choice, even for active children. A balanced diet provides all the vitamins and minerals a child needs. There is no reason for kids to drink sports drinks unless a health professional specifically recommends that they do.

“Some caffeine is ok for children and teens.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children under the age of 18 never have caffeine. Regular soda has 32 milligrams of caffeine and energy drinks have 80 milligrams per serving. Any amount is too much but the high levels in energy drinks are especially worrisome.

“Drinks with “natural” and “real” labels are healthy.”

According to an FDA definition, a natural ingredient only needs to be derived from a natural source. This means that many natural ingredients originated from a recognizable food but many have undergone chemical and physical processes to drastically change the ingredient. The term “real” is currently unregulated by the FDA. Although many drinks often contain labels describing “natural” and “real” ingredients, remember that not one of these sugary drinks occurs in nature and most contain ingredients that are manufactured in a lab.