



FANCY A FRUIT JUICE?

Is fruit juice a health food or a glamorized sugary drink?

Parents don't usually set limits on their children's consumption of juice. After all, it's considered nutritious. But health experts are increasingly questioning whether fruit juice should lose its wholesome image.

For thousands of years, humans drank mostly water and ate whole fruit. Juice on tap is a relatively modern phenomenon, prompted by the surplus of citrus fruits on the market in the early 1900s. Following years of concerted marketing efforts, we've come to view fruit juice with a halo. So what's the good and the bad about fruit juice?

pros

- ▶ Drinking some juice can help you to meet your requirement for servings of fruit, which can be helpful if you don't get enough fruit.
- ▶ Fruit juice is a good source of vitamin C, folate (vitamin B₉), and potassium, and it provides a range of other micronutrients.
- ▶ Fruit juice is a better choice than soft drinks or sport drinks, because juices can deliver many types of disease-fighting phytonutrients such as anthocyanins, catechins, and phenols.

However, there's some bad news along with the good.

cons

- ▶ Fruit juice is high in sugar and calories, and the inconvenient truth is that it may contribute to weight gain, especially in children. How many pieces of fruit does it take to make a glass of juice that you can gulp down in five seconds?
- ▶ The acids in fruit juice can dissolve the enamel on your teeth. In fact, some juices are even more damaging than soft drinks.
- ▶ The high concentration of fructose can cause diarrhea, flatulence, and bloating in people with irritable bowel syndrome.
- ▶ A high intake of fruit juice can raise the level of triglyceride fats in your blood—a risk factor for heart disease.
- ▶ Most commercially prepared juices lack dietary fiber.

what should you do?

The best health drink is still water. It's smarter to eat your fruit whole rather than taking the lazy juice option. If you make your own juice, you should add back the fiber or blend it with the juice into a smoothie. Limit regular fruit juice intake to one glass per day, especially if you are overweight, and drink it with a meal.

Nutritionist Sue Radd is the award-winning author of *The Breakfast Book* and coauthor of *Eat To Live*, internationally acclaimed for showing how savvy eating can combat cancer and heart disease and improve well-being. See www.sueradd.com for more nutrition information.