


ARE AMERICANS GETTING FATTER BECAUSE OF WHAT WE ARE drinking? That's the question posed by a panel of nutritional experts formed to create beverage guidelines to help adults make better choices.

Research shows that between 1977 and 2001, American consumption of sweetened beverages such as sodas, juices and energy drinks increased three-fold. In fact, 20 percent of Americans' daily calorie intake comes from beverages, twice the World Health Organization recommendation of 10 percent.

The Healthy Beverage Guidelines, published in the March 2006 issue of the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, places heavy emphasis on water and unsweetened coffee and tea. Interestingly, nonfat or low-fat milk and fortified soy beverages are recommended over artificially sweetened diet beverages. This is because each beverage group was ranked according to both caloric and nutrient contents and related health benefits and risks. Therefore, a 100-calorie glass of nonfat milk is preferable to a zero-calorie can of soda. Alcoholic drinks, which the panel acknowledges have some health benefits for adults when consumed in moderation, are included in Level 5, while Level 6, which features calorically sweetened beverages, such as soft drinks and fruit drinks, are the least recommended by the panel.

The Healthy Beverage Guidelines were funded by the Unilever Health Institute, North America and created by a panel of leading nutrition experts led by Barry Popkin, director of the University of North Carolina Inter-disciplinary Obesity Program. The Guidelines are designed to help consumers enjoy all types of beverages by providing them with the information necessary to make informed choices. 

Source: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 2006; 83, 529-42.



You Are What You Drink, too

Healthy Beverage Guidelines

The panel ranked beverages from lowest to highest value based on caloric and nutrient content, and related health benefits and risks.

LEVEL 6: Calorie-rich beverages without nutrients (up to one serving*, less if trying to lose weight - 110 calories)



LEVEL 5: 100% fruit and vegetable juices, whole milk, sports drinks (up to one serving* - 115 calories)



LEVEL 4: Diet beverages with sugar substitutes (up to four servings* - 0 calories)



LEVEL 3: Nonfat or low-fat milk and fortified soy beverages (up to two servings* - 100 calories per serving)



LEVEL 2: Unsweetened coffee and tea, iced and hot (up to eight servings* a day of tea, up to four servings* of coffee - 0 calories)



LEVEL 1:

Water (up to nine servings of water for women, up to 13 servings* for men - 0 calories)



*A serving size is 8 ounces.

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