

Rethink your drink

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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Choosing healthy beverages is a great first step to an overall healthy diet. Americans are drinking more soft drinks than ever. Per capita soft-drink consumption has increased almost 500 percent over the past 50 years. Suppliers produce enough regular soda to supply every American with more than 14 ounces of soda every day.

One reason for the steady rise in soft drink consumption is larger portion sizes. For example, fountain drinks can range in size from 22 to 64 ounces. Another reason is children start drinking soda at a remarkably young age, and consumption increases through young adulthood.

People who drink soft drinks take in more calories than those who do not. Drinking sugar-sweetened beverages has been associated with weight gain, overweight, obesity, and type 2 diabetes, reports Extension Educator Andrea Nisley. A 12-ounce can of soda has 150 calories and 10 teaspoons of sugar in the form of high fructose corn syrup. If these calories are added to the typical diet without cutting back on something else, one soda a day could lead to a weight gain of 15 pounds in one year.

Sports drinks, another popular soft drink, are for athletes who participate in high-intensity, aerobic exercise for at least 90 minutes. Most kids are not this active. The added sugar and sodium in sports drinks are unnecessary for children and youth. Sports drinks offer little advantage over water for kids.

Try these tips to help everyone in the family to “re-think your drink.”

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- Help children learn to enjoy water as the thirst quencher of choice.

- Make soft drinks a “sometimes” beverage to be enjoyed in moderate amounts. Remember that soft drinks include fruitades, fruit drinks, lemonade, energy drinks, sweet tea, and sports drinks.

- Keep a pitcher of water in the refrigerator for easy access.

- Add lemon, lime, other fruit, or a splash of juice to water.

For more information on healthy eating contact your local UN-L Extension office and or on the web at www.food.unl.edu UNL Extension is committed to helping Nebraskans know how—and know now.