

EXPLORING THE SWEET SIDE: The Pros and Cons of Different Types of Sugar in Beverages

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NOT ALL SUGAR IS CREATED EQUAL

According to the USDA, added sugar should not exceed 10% of our caloric intake. That translates to a cap of 50 grams of sugar daily for the standard 2,000 calorie per day diet. Mocktails® products range from **18-22 grams of sugar per serving**, less than half of the maximum recommended daily intake—completely reasonable for a celebratory beverage. Plus, because they don't contain alcohol, you are likely to consume less volume than if you opted for an alcoholic beverage.

On the other hand, my favorite flavor of soda contains **76 grams of sugar** per serving size (one bottle). Pre-made mixers, which have become very popular of late and are often marketed as “healthy,” can weigh in at a whopping **49 grams!** My favorite alcohol-free juice-based cocktail to order at a bar or restaurant contains **50 grams of sugar**. Yes, largely this sugar is “natural,” as it is extracted from fruit, but most commercial juices eliminate the wholesome parts of the fruit in its original package, such as skin and pulp, which are important sources of fiber and nutrients. One serving of orange juice takes eight medium oranges to produce, but we aren't meant to regularly consume them that way. We would not eat eight oranges in one sitting, yet we seem to view juice differently.

Needless to say, aside from lacking alcohol, those options aren't too promising from a health and nutrition perspective.

CONSIDER THE SOURCE

You are likely familiar with drink mixers, including fancy lemonades, or sweetened seltzers with lower sugar content than other solutions such as Mocktails Uniquely Crafted®. Usually, this is due to the use of artificial ingredients to improve the taste of the beverage. Let's dive into a few of these mysterious substances:

The Journal of Toxicology has named **sucralose**, a common artificial alternative to sugar, as “genotoxic,” meaning it can actually change your gut microbiome and damage DNA.

The Cleveland Clinic in Ohio reports that **sugar alcohols such as erythritol, sorbitol, xylitol** have been linked to:

- Increased risk for heart attack and stroke
- Hypertension
- Cardiovascular events
- DNA damage
- Gut health issues and oxidative stress
- Inflammation
- Cancer

Compounding the sugar conundrum, we have seen many fad diets come and go, most of which are lacking evidence-based research for health and wellness. Especially with the advent of the internet, misconceptions and myths can easily spread to the general public. For example, many food companies are catering to the “keto diet,” which is low-carbohydrate, meaning low-sugar. Thus, while newer drinks on the market advertised as sugar-free or low-sugar might seem appealing, they come at a price for our health because less attention is being paid to the **quality** of ingredients.

With more and more engineered ingredients entering the beverage marketplace every day, there is still much research to be done concerning the long-term consequences. Thus, sticking to **pure** sugar, in moderate amounts, is a safer bet scientifically speaking, as we know its anatomy and have a plethora of research to support its effects on the body.

As a nutrition expert and advocate of mindful consumption in every way, I wholeheartedly recommend any product with natural ingredients, even if slightly higher in grams of *natural* sugar. Every sip is a choice and many beverage options are made with stealthy ingredients with no long-term studies or proper evaluations on the lasting and potentially harmful effects.

For more information and resources from Lindsey, visit her on instagram @spiritvigilante or her website: thespiritvigilante.com

References

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