

Benefits of water

Can you guess what percentage of calories Americans consume that come from what they drink? Three percent? Ten? No, try twenty percent! Yes, that's right, one-fifth of the calories we take in come from liquids.

Here is a no-brainer way to begin to cut back on your caloric intake: Stop drinking sodas (even diet), juices, mega-sized "health" smoothies with 120 grams of sugar in them, whipped coffee drinks, iced tea loaded with corn syrup, and all those sport and vitamin drinks that are actually filled with sugar and calories.

What's the magic word? Water. Okay, if you love a cup of java in the morning, then get it. Try to avoid all the extras with it, and if you're looking for a pick-me-up in the middle of the day, have an unsweetened green tea instead of a soda or energy drink.

Otherwise, try your best to stick with the water, and if it gets too boring, add a splash of cranberry juice or a slice of lemon to mix it up. Getting enough water can help us in our quest for better health in so many ways:

- Flush out toxins
- Reduce your risk of heart attack
- Help with joint and muscle pain
- Boost your metabolic rate
- Improve organ function
- Keep you regular
- Prevent headaches
- Promote healthy skin
- Regulate body temperature
- Get energized and improve alertness

Wow, you can kill two birds with one stone: Cut out unwanted calories and do something good for yourself in the meantime. I don't know about you, but if I'm going to have a bunch of sugar or calories I want it to be something I have to chew -- preferably chocolate. Waste it on some drink? No way.

Here's another no-brainer. Make your iced teas homemade and then you can control how sweet you make it, what you sweeten it with, and how much caffeine you get in them. I'd never drink an iced tea made with corn syrup. I'd drink a soda first before I did that.