

No Diet Required

3 Simple Tips to Improve Health

#1 Decrease liquid calories

Liquid calories come from any drink that contains sugar and fat, like cream, but mostly sugar. The sugar can be natural such as in fruit juice or added found in regular soda or specialty coffees. Let's not forget alcohol. Although the calories may not be in the form of sugar unless it's sweetened; it does contain calories. Consuming liquid calories in excess can pack on the pounds quickly. Below is a minimal chart highlighting the sugar content in popular drinks to give you a simple overview of calories. For detailed information on your favorite beverage of choice, go to the company's website to find out how many calories and sugar you're sipping without realizing it.

Below are the calorie and sugar contents in 12 ounces of some popular high-sugar beverages cited from Healthline (1):

Name of Drink	Ounces	Total Calories	Calories per oz.	Total grams sugar	Sugar (grams) per oz	Total cubes of sugar (1 cube of sugar 4 grams -tsp)
Mocha Frappuccino® Blended Beverage	16	370	23	51	3.2	~13 cubes
Iced Coffee with 2% Milk (caramel syrup)	16 (Grande)	110	7	24	1.5	6 cubes
Butter Pecan Swirl Iced Coffee with Cream	16 (Small)	170	11	24	1.5	6 cubes
Frozen Chai Latte Frozen Chai Latte - Small	16	350	22	64	4	16 cubes
OJ (Simply Orange)	8	110	~14	24	3	~6 cubes
Soda (Coke®)	12	140	12	39	3.25	~10 cubes
Beer (Average)	12	150	12.5	0	0	n/a
Wine (Average)	5	123	25	varies	Varies	n/a

- **Soda:** 151 calories and 39 grams of sugar
- **Sweetened iced tea:** 144 calories and 35 grams of sugar.
- **Unsweetened orange juice:** 175 calories and 33 grams of sugar
- **Unsweetened grape juice:** 228 calories and 54 grams of sugar
- **Fruit punch:** 175 calories and 42 grams of sugar
- **Lemonade:** 149 calories and 37 grams of sugar
- **Sports beverage:** 118 calories and 22 grams of sugar

Excess liquid calories may cause weight gain, obesity, high blood sugar, inflammation, high triglycerides, and increase your risk for heart disease.

To decrease your liquid calories:

1. Start your day with water (plain or sparkling), tea, or coffee (hot or iced) – you may use cream or milk if transitioning from sweetened to plain, but no added sugar including artificial sweeteners. Measure your cream/milk and limit it to 2 servings per day. The calories in cream and milk can add up quickly!
 - Don't like water? Try infusing it with lemon, lime, cucumber, or orange slices. Dilute your fruit juice with (check that it's 100% juice) 6-8 oz of water.
2. Decrease the amount of soda (including diet) and any juices until you are no longer drinking soda and/or juice. Maybe the following information will inspire you...
 - Phosphorus found in soda competes for the calcium in your bones, leaving you at a higher risk for early osteoporosis. < weak and brittle bones
 - Juice (commercial) is simply sugar water and has no nutritional value, unless freshly squeezed.
3. Track your fluid intake. Count how many ounces of non-caloric vs. caloric drinks you consume in a day. Aim for no more than 150 calories for all liquid calories a day, including alcohol.

#2 Decrease overeating and practice portion control

Solely by decreasing how much you eat in volume will help you lose weight. Most everyone has experienced that “stuffed” feeling of overeating, think Thanksgiving meal. Understanding the difference between a portion and a serving in volume is key when plating your food. Volume is based on your comfort level of fullness. A portion is how much food you choose to eat at one time. A serving, or serving size, as listed on the Nutrition Facts Label is the recommended or suggested amount to eat for that specific food. You might consume more or less than 1 serving depending on how much you require in volume to feel comfortably full. That said, serving size recommendations from a label is a practical place to start grasping the concept of portion control.

Some tips to help you get started:

- Avoid eating in front of a screen, especially the TV and computer. It can be distracting and may lead to overeating. This is difficult because we think we're saving time, but each time you practice this behavior, you are reinforcing the habit, making it more challenging to break.
- Eat until you are comfortably full. Stop eating at the start of feeling full. This will take some practice.
- Discover what comfortably full feels like in your stomach each time you eat.
- Focus on chewing your food well and fully enjoying the taste with each bite. You'll notice once you do this repeatedly, you will reach fullness on less food.
- Eat slowly so your stomach can communicate to your brain that you are full. This usually takes at least 15-20 minutes.
- Put your fork or spoon down in between bites to help you slowly eat. Swallow your food first before you take another bite. Try using your less preferred hand to feed yourself.
- Use smaller dishes, bowls, and glasses to dish less food. Visually, this tactic will give the illusion of more food.
- Strive to eat meals at consistent times. In other words, eat around the same time each day. This includes those of you who practice intermittent fasting and one meal a day.
- Start to increase fruits and vegetables and decrease carbohydrates (rice, bread, pasta, potato, etc.) Eat your vegetables before your carbohydrates.
- If you must snack, choose fruits and vegetables. It's difficult to eat a bag of apples vs. a bag of chips.
- Don't eat from the bag or box unless it's a single serving.
- Measure food. Use appropriate measuring cups and spoons, not flatware. No heaping measurements.

- Start meal prepping at home. Pack lunch/dinner from home and take it to work a few days during the week. Eating out leads to overeating and excess calories.

#3 No Snacking Necessary

This topic is highly debatable due to all the confusion around why we've been conditioned to snack. Unless you have a medical condition that requires calories outside of mealtime or your next meal will be more than 5-6 hours from your last and you're not intermitting fasting, there is no reason to snack. Period. Snacking is a habit and not always a healthy one.

In summary:

1. Decrease liquid calories and increase water.
2. Stop eating at the start of feeling full to reach a level of comfortably full.
3. Break the habit of snacking.

Bonus Tip: Maintain a food record/journal to evaluate what foods you are not eating enough of, and those you may be overeating. It doesn't matter whether you hand-write your food intake or use an online dietary assessment website or app. The objective is to record everything you eat and drink, measured. If you've used an app in the past and you're comfortable with it, use that app. There are plenty of free food-tracking apps to choose from. Find one that's easiest for you. Ultimately, this information will assist in developing a personalized eating plan to ensure your nutritional needs and goals are met.

Reference:

1. <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/liquid-sugar-calories#weight-gain> accessed: 6/19/21.