

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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It used to be "Eight glasses of water a day!" and no substitutes allowed. Surely someone told you that at some time. Then a doctor tried to trace where that rule came from, and found that there was no real medical basis for it. When doctors started looking at the hydration levels - the measure of how much water your body has compared to how much it needs - they realized that people who drank coffee, tea or soda instead of water were as well hydrated as those who only drank water.

Now we realize that any liquid - coffee, tea, soup, juice, soda, milk - will help provide the liquid our bodies need. So will the moisture in fruits and vegetables. So will gelatin, frozen juice bars and milkshakes. Most healthy people don't need to force themselves to drink anything extra if they just drink when they are thirsty.

We used to think that juice was good for children and that they could be allowed to drink as much as they wanted. The problem was that juice is sweet. Children naturally prefer sweets, so they would drink it all day long. But along with the sweet taste juice also has lots of acid and lots of calories. The acid is bad for developing teeth. The sweet and liquid fill a little stomach up fast, so children drink instead of eating. They don't eat as much nutritious food as they need. Juice doesn't have anything to make strong bones or muscles, anything to develop the brain or nervous system. It just adds calories that turn into fat.

Now the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that small children not be allowed to drink more than 4 to 6 ounces of juice a day. That much provides all the

vitamin C a child needs for the day, without too many calories and without upsetting their appetite for other foods. When they want more to drink they should be given water.

The latest worry about drinking has become too much water. Hyperhydration, or having too much water in our bodies, has caused injury or illness. Most of the time this is only a problem in people who are exercising, sweating a lot and only drinking water. Too much water without enough minerals can change the balance of our blood. The symptoms of hyperhydration can be as simple as confusion and feeling very tired, or as bad as seizures.

So, what should we drink, and how much of it do we need? As we get older we lose our sense of thirst, so elderly people might need to be reminded to drink more often. Some illnesses cause dehydration, some cause us to not feel thirsty. So some sick people need to be offered more liquid. Cold weather decreases the sense of thirst for all of us. This time of year we can all pay a little more attention to how much we drink, especially if we're spending time working in the yard or exercising more. But for most healthy people, we should just drink when we are thirsty.

Any liquid other than alcoholic drinks will provide the moisture we need to stay hydrated. Most have good and bad points. Orange juice has enough acid to irritate the lining of the throat of some people. Apple juice has certain sugars that can cause some diarrhea in small children. Cranberry juice has the added advantage of not allowing bacteria to stick to the lining of our bladder. That's why it's often credited with curing urinary infections. Tea has antioxidants to help protect us, but also binds iron and prevents its absorption. Coffee has caffeine, to wake us up or give us the jitters. Milk has calcium, but gives some people gas and diarrhea. So, take your choice. Drink

when you're thirsty, choose a variety of liquids, just don't overdo the calories.

Here's a bright cheery, Christmas-y red punch. With half the calories of eggnog it can be a star at your next party when you toast to health as well the holiday. Enjoy!

### Cheery Holiday Punch

3 ½ C orange juice

1 ½ C pineapple juice

1 ½ quarts cranberry juice

1 ½ C lemon juice

1 ½ to 2 C sugar or low-calorie sweetener equivalent

3 C water (or use carbonated water or seltzer water)

Combine juices. Dissolve sugar or sweetener in small amount of water, add to juice.

Mix well. Chill until ready to serve. Add chilled carbonated or seltzer water just before

serving. (Note: Do not store or serve in galvanized or pewter containers!) Serve over

crushed ice. Serves 16.

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