**Day 22**

**Title: Sugary Drinks: Choose Wisely**

Earlier in the program, we talked about how the average adult in the United States consumes 76.6 grams of added sugar each day. That’s about 19 teaspoons. Now that you’ve been tracking what you’re eating, you may have noticed that you get more added sugar than what’s recommended (6 teaspoons per day for women, 9 teaspoons per day for men). You may have also noticed that sweet drinks contribute quite a bit of added sugar to your daily total. If so, you’re not alone. In fact, 45% of the added sugar the average adult gets comes from sweet drinks. This includes regular sodas, fruitades and sports drinks, sweetened coffees and teas, and energy drinks. So if you want to make a good sized dent in your added sugars, start by cutting back on sweet drinks.

**How sugary drinks add up**

Let’s say here’s what you drink throughout the day:

* 8 oz. orange juice for breakfast (21 grams sugar, 122 calories)
* 12 oz. coffee with 2 sugars on the way to work (10 grams sugar, 40 calories)
* 1 (12 oz.) regular soda at lunch (39 grams sugar, 140 calories)
* Another 12 oz. soda as a pick-me-up in the afternoon (39 grams sugar, 140 calories)
* 16 oz. sweetened iced tea with dinner (43 grams sugar, 181 calories)
* 1 bottle of water sipped throughout the day (0 grams sugar, 0 calories)

These choices give you a whopping 152 grams of sugar (38 teaspoons!) and 623 calories. To put that in perspective, that’s more calories than 2 cups of chocolate ice cream. If you’re used to this many sweetened drinks, cutting them out all at once can be a challenge. To help your taste buds adjust, try reducing them over time. Replace a sweet drink with a non-sweetened one. Or, reduce the amount of sugar you add to a drink. Or even reduce the amount you drink. Here’s an example of a few small changes you could make to cut back the added sugar and calories.

* Reduce from 8 oz. of orange juice to 4 oz. (10.5 grams sugar, 61 calories)
* Reduce from 2 sugars to 1 in your coffee (5 grams sugar, 20 calories)
* Drink ½ of a regular soda (6 oz. instead of 12 oz.) at lunch (19.5 grams sugar, 70 calories)
* Replace your afternoon soda with unsweetened black tea (0 grams sugar, 0 calories)
* Replace your sweetened tea with unsweetened tea or water (0 grams sugar, 0 calories)
* Drink more water--24 oz. instead of 16 (0 grams sugar, 0 calories)

With these simple substitutions and other changes, you can cut your added sugar from drinks down from 152 grams to 35 grams (8.75 teaspoons). This also brings your calories down from 623 to a much more manageable 131.

**What about artificial sweeteners?**

Though artificial sweeteners have been around for a while now and are considered safe, you may want to reconsider switching from regular sodas to diet or swapping out sugar for a pink, blue, or yellow packet of sweetener.

Several studies have found that people who drink artificially sweetened drinks frequently and over a long period of time have a higher risk of certain health problems. These problems include overweight and obesity, increased belly fat, high blood pressure, diabetes, and heart disease.

As with everything, moderation is key. People who drank the highest number of artificially sweetened beverages had the highest risk of these health problems. So like with any sweet drink, if you plan to indulge in an artificially sweetened beverage, let it really be an indulgence, and not an everyday thing.

**A final word**

Sweetened drinks account for almost half of the added sugars the average adult gets. It’s best to switch from sweetened drinks to non-sweetened drinks. If this is too difficult, artificially sweetened drinks are an alternative. Just know that there is some concern over the long-term health effects of drinking too much, too often.

**Sources:**

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