

**On Nutrition: by Helayne Waldman, Ed.D., N.E.**

# To Juice or Not to Juice

It's summertime, and as they say, the living is easy. But in this heat we're all a bit thirsty. As you probably know, drinking plenty of pure water helps to keep our cells happy, our skin vibrant, our brains perking along, and yes, our bowels moving. Some of us, however, are all too quick to grab a cola or a Gatorade instead. The more nutritionally conscious among us may even believe we're doing ourselves a good turn by tossing down a glass of apple or cranberry juice.

But how good is that fruit juice for you and your thirsty kids?

## **The trouble with fruit juice**

In May of 2001, the *Journal Pediatrics* published an article warning doctors that over consumption of fruit juice in children is problematic. Hundreds of other experts have echoed this concern. Here's why.

Pure fruit juice, that is, fruit minus pulp, contains large amounts of simple carbohydrates that you know, if you've been following this column for awhile, forces the body to secrete a flood of insulin. This in turn promotes fat storage.

Making matters worse, not only is your typical glass of fruit juice full of sugar, many supermarket brands will add *additional* sugar, artificial sweetener, artificial flavors, colors and other ingredients. These artificial ingredients can have a particularly deleterious effect on children, promoting



learning and behavioral problems in susceptible kids.

To complicate things even further, if you're not a careful label reader you may wind up bringing home a bottle of fruit "drink" or a fruit "cocktail." What this means, in English, is that sugar and water have been added to a paltry base of fruit juice to save money for the manufacturer and improve shelf life. Care for some cherry soda without the carbonation?

The critical takeaway is this: pulp (a source of fiber) is powerful! It helps slow the release of insulin into your bloodstream, promotes healthy digestion and guess what? It even makes a good fertilizer for the healthy "good guy" bacteria in your colon. Why not get the whole enchilada by eating apples, berries and oranges with their full complement of juices, vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and fiber?

## **The joys of veggie juice**

Vegetable juice, on the other hand, carries none of the liabilities of fruit juice. Most vegetables (with beets being the major exception) are naturally lower in sugar than fruit. And juicing the veggies

actually accomplishes some of the "pre-digestion" work for you, making all those remarkable nutrients even more absorbable.

Store-bought vegetable juice like V8 is not a bad way to start. You'll get copious amounts of a nutrient known as lycopene, which has been touted as a major cancer-preventative, especially cancer of the prostate.

But if you want to become a real aficionado, juicing your own vegetables is the only way to go. Many people prefer to start with carrots, as they are sweet and delicious. As you discover your juicing fancies, you may want to experiment with additional, more exotic vegetables. Like the taste of anise? Spice your concoction up with a fennel bulb, or a bit of ginger rhizome. Then try adding celery, cucumbers, romaine – even cabbage, known for centuries as an ulcer healer par excellence. For additional flavor and a boost of extra nutrition, experiment with your favorite garden herbs – herbs like parsley, cilantro, or basil.

If you like the way you feel, you may really want to go to town by adding some whey protein powder, rich in high quality amino acids, or some flax or sesame seeds. Before you know it, you'll be getting a great start on the 5-10 servings of vegetables currently recommended for good health, plus getting quality protein and fatty acids in one fell swoop!

Of course you'll need to invest in a quality juicer to make it happen. Not sure if juicing is for you? Then check out one of the less expensive, "starter" models and see what you think. Amazon.com has several modestly priced varieties that can get you started.

**The last word**

Sounds like a lot of trouble doesn't it? Maybe even

perhaps a bit... distasteful? Get over it! With all those extraordinary fresh vitamins, minerals and antioxidants helping you feel fully alive and a flavor customized to your own individual sense of taste, you'll forget all about your initial queasiness.

But don't worry, I'll never say I told you so.

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