

Spotting Sugar on Drink Labels

Sugar is in many of the drinks we consume, such as soda, sweetened tea, lemonade, energy drinks, sports drinks, and fruit-flavored drinks. Consuming added sugar from these drinks can be harmful to our health and the health of our children. Reading the Nutrition Facts label can tell us how much sugar is in the sugar-sweetened beverages we consume. This can help us make smart drink choices and show our preschoolers the large amount of sugar found in sugar-sweetened beverages.

The amount of sugar contained in a packaged food or drink is listed on its Nutrition Facts label. Pay careful attention to the serving size. Oftentimes, large bottles of drinks have more than one serving. This means that the actual amount of sugar for the entire bottle may be two times (or perhaps more) the amount listed on the Nutrition Facts Label. There are 4.2 grams in a teaspoon, so think about a drink with 42 grams of sugar. This is the same as 10 teaspoons of sugar. You can demonstrate just how much added sugar this is by scooping the number of teaspoons contained in a sugar-sweetened beverage into a resealable plastic bag or an empty drink bottle. Compare that amount with how much added sugar is in plain water or milks—none! Show your preschooler an empty bag or bottle compared to the sugar

in a sugar-sweetened beverage to illustrate the difference and why water and low-fat milk are smarter drink choices than sugar-sweetened beverages.

Avoid offering fruit-flavored drinks as these beverages tend to be high in added sugar. Juice contains a lot of natural sugar and can be as harmful as other sugar-sweetened beverages if consumed too much. When offering juice, choose 100% juice and limit the amount offered to your preschooler to no more than 4–6 ounces a day.

Help your preschooler become a “Sugar Spy” and show them how much sugar hides in their favorite drinks!



Provided by NC EFNEP, a Cooperative Extension program