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Living Well

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Beverage Choices

What you drink is as important as what you eat. Many beverages contain added sugars and offer little or no nutrients, while others may provide nutrients, but too much fat and too many calories. Below are some tips to help you make better beverage choices:

***Drink water.** Drink water instead of sugary drinks when you are thirsty. Regular soda, energy or sports drinks, and other sweet drinks usually contain a lot of added sugar, which provides more calories than needed. To maintain a healthy weight, sip water or other drinks with few or no calories.

***How much water is enough?** Let your thirst be your guide. Water is an important nutrient for the body, but everyone's needs are different. Most of us get enough water from the foods we eat and the beverages we drink. A healthy body can balance water needs throughout the day. Drink plenty of water if you are very active, live or work in hot conditions, or are an older adult.

***Manage your calories.** Drink water with and between your meals. Adults and children take in about 400 calories per day as beverages—drinking water can help you manage your calories.

***Kid-friendly beverages.** Make water, low-fat or fat-free milk, or 100% juice an easy option in your home. Have ready-to-go containers filled with water or healthy drinks available in the refrigerator. Place them in lunch boxes or backpacks for easy access when kids are away

from home. Depending on age, children can drink ½ to 1 cup, and adults can drink up to 1 cup of 100% fruit or vegetable juice each day.

***Don't forget your dairy.** When you choose milk or milk alternatives, select low-fat or fat-free milk or fortified soymilk. Each type of milk offers the same key nutrients such as calcium, vitamin D, and potassium, but the number of calories are very different. Older children, teens, and adults need 3 cups of milk per day, while children 4 to 8 years old need 2½ cups and children 2 to 3 years old need 2 cups.

***Enjoy your beverage.** When water just won't do—enjoy the beverage of your choice, but just cut back. Remember to check the serving size and the number of servings in the can, bottle, or container to stay within calorie needs. Select smaller cans, cups, or glasses instead of large or supersized options.

***Water on the go.** Water is always convenient. Fill a clean, reusable water bottle and toss it in your bag or brief case to quench your thirst throughout the day. Reusable bottles are also easy on the environment.

For more information on beverage choices, visit choosemyplate.gov or contact the Flint Hills Extension District office in Cottonwood Falls at (620) 273-6491 or the office in Council Grove at (620) 767-5136.