

Is Your Student's Drink of Choice Setting Them up for Physical and Academic Success?

Every day, students walk through our front doors ready for a new school day, carrying their morning beverage of choice. Do you know what's in the drinks they're consuming each morning? Some energy drinks have over 50 grams of sugar per can. Most fancy coffee drinks contain 50-60 grams of sugar per cup. Those numbers are almost double the recommended sugar intake for adults in a day, let alone a teen! In addition, these drinks can contain more caffeine than recommended for teens. That amount of sugar and caffeine is not healthy for their growing bodies or their brains.

Energy drinks and the excessive coffee shop drinks are not appropriate for teens. Sorry, they're just not. These drinks contain high levels of caffeine and excessive sugar. This combo means a burst of energy, but it also means a crash later. This crash will leave students feeling even more tired and unable to focus—usually a few hours after they arrive at school and when they are in a class. Regularly consuming this amount of caffeine will impact their sleep and can contribute to anxiety. Yes, the marketing and packaging of these drinks appeal to teens—but that doesn't mean they are a good choice for teens to consume.

Gatorade, fruit juice, and soda all kind of fall into the same category → high sugar. And if kids are drinking these instead of water, they are missing out on the hydration their growing bodies need. Hydration is essential for concentration, physical performance, and overall well-being. Teens should have about 8-11 cups of water/day.

So what can you offer your teen as replacements? For soda and energy drinks, try Poppi, Ollipop, or Zevia. These “sodas” will provide the fizz and fun (and a little caffeine) like soda, but without all the additives of regular soda or energy drinks.

For a coffee shop treat, just make some swaps! Use coconut milk, almond milk, or nonfat milk instead of whole milk or cream that comes with the drink. Cut the pumps of syrup in half AND switch them to the sugar-free syrups. Skip the whipped cream and save it for a treat once a month. Google “swaps for my _____ drink” and see what you find. Example- instead of a Frappuccino, order an iced vanilla latte with only two pumps of sugar-free syrup.

Instead of sports drinks or a large fruit juice, add fruit or cucumber slices to water. Find a clean brand of sparkling water (Spindrift, Mountain Valley, Pellegrino, or Waterloo are good examples). Have your active student try coconut water or water with a pinch of salt and a squeeze of fruit after a game or workout—maximum hydration without all the fillers and sugar in a sports drink.

Eight hours of school, job or sports after school, homework before bed, and social interactions pack our teens' days. Their bodies are growing, and their brains need to engage with new learning. They need to start their days with healthy choices instead of 500 empty calories, 50 grams of sugar, and an overload of caffeine!