

UNL FOR FAMILIES

Go, Slow Whoa

Using a traffic light (Green, Yellow, Red) is an easy method for choosing healthy drinks for summer. First of all check out the nutrition label for calories (remember sometimes there are more than one serving per container, so you have to multiply the calories per serving by the number of servings), then look at the nutrients in the beverage.

Go Drinks – Low-fat milk is a drink everyone, especially children should drink lots because it is high in calcium and Vitamin D. These two nutrients are essential for building strong teeth and bones, so low-fat milk gets a green light. If you are lactose intolerant, choose soy or other non-dairy milk if they are low-fat, unsweetened and fortified with calcium and Vitamin D. Water is healthy too. It refreshes our bodies and has no calories. If you don't drink enough water or other liquids you can get dehydrated which keeps your mind and body from being as fast and sharp as you want to be.

Slow Drinks – These are drinks that have a lot of nutrients but also have a lot of sugar and calories. For example 100% fruit juice is high in vitamins, it's also high in natural sugar, so 1 cup of juice a day will give us the vitamins we need without adding more calories than we need.

Stop Drinks – Sweetened drinks have lots of calories, but few to zero nutrients. Other problems with these drinks are they don't make you feel full, so you tend to drink a lot, and when drinking these drinks we tend not to drink healthier drinks like milk and water. The added sugar also cause tooth decay and cavities. So check out the nutrition label for sugar content and calories, and if there are few to no nutrients, this is definitely a red light...stop beverage.

Source: Sue Pearman, NE Extension Educator, 4-H and Youth Development, Central Sandhills Area

For more information on healthy food choices go to <http://food.unl.edu>.

