



St Helena
Government

HEALTHY

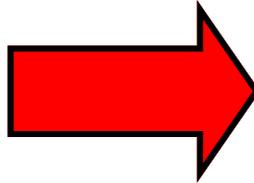
DRINKS CHOICES



Your Questions Answered



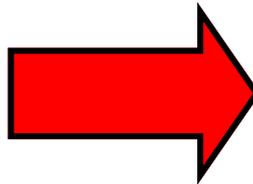
Standard Cool Drink 330ml



**9-10 teaspoons of sugar
130 calories**



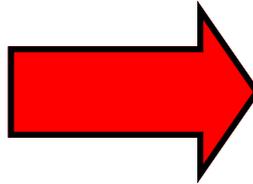
100% Fruit Juice 330ml



**9-10 teaspoons of sugar
140 calories**



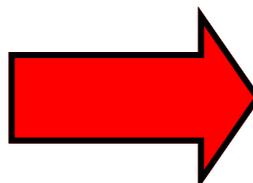
Tap Or Bottled Water



**ZERO SUGAR
ZERO CALORIES**



Sugar-Free Cool Drink



**ZERO SUGAR
ZERO CALORIES**

HEALTHY DRINKS CHOICES: YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Community members have asked for some clear information to help them choose healthier drinks for themselves and their families. The Health Directorate provides some answers below:

Why is sugar in drinks a problem?

In recent years there has been more focus on sugar as something that plays a major role in type-two Diabetes, Heart Disease, Stroke, and various cancers, as well as increasing levels of obesity, which contributes to these. These conditions now affect people at younger ages and the increase of sugar in the diet in all countries has been shown to be an important part of the problem. The amount of processed food and drinks has increased and often this contains a lot of sugar, even in products where we wouldn't expect it. Reducing the most obvious high sugar items such as sugary drinks is one of the easiest starting places, as there are alternatives available to switch to, and in itself can take out a substantial amount of unnecessary sugar from our diets.



Which drinks include a lot of sugar?

Most people are now aware that standard full sugar cool or soft drinks like lemonade or cola include a lot of sugar. Diluting or mixer 'juice' also contains a lot of sugar, as well as lunch-box carton drinks. Flavoured waters all look very similar, but some contain sugar and some do not. This is a problem if we are trying to find out which one is healthier and which ones to buy for our families. Concentrated fruit juices like 'Rhodes', 'Liqui Fruit' and 'Ceres', are marketed as a healthy option and are sometimes even labelled 'no added sugar', yet they contain a similar amount of sugar as in full sugar cool drinks. The manufacturers may have added no extra sugar but the Fructose or 'fruit sugar' itself is very high in this type of concentrated fruit liquid, and unfortunately Fructose content, dilute a lot (nine parts water to one of juice). Many people on-Island, young and old, still add sugar to their tea or coffee. It may only be one or two teaspoons here and there but again it adds to those 'hidden' in other foods and drinks, adding calories and sugar for your body to deal with. Synthetic sweeteners such as 'Canderel', 'Sweetex', 'Stevia', or 'Tesco Sweetener' are a much healthier alternative to feed your sweet tooth and help reduce sugar and calories.

"I only have a couple of cool drinks a week and don't need to lose weight"

Many people on St Helena drink different drinks that include sugar, including cool drinks, mixer squash, milkshakes, concentrated fruit juices, and in tea or coffee. Full sugar drinks put a lot of sugar into your system in one go and, unlike sugary foods, there is no

chewing and we feel less full than after eating, so these drinks add calories rather than replacing others. Being overweight increases your risk of Diabetes, Heart Disease and Cancer, but it isn't just a problem for people who are overweight. If any of us have too much sugar it damages our ability to process sugar, our vascular system, and heart tissue. You could argue that a full sugar cool drink or glass of undiluted fruit juice itself doesn't do you any harm. The point is that most of us drink more than this in a week and the large amount of sugar they add to the sugar in foods we buy and are less aware of. Unlike many other products, there are various low cost sugar-free alternatives.

Are Sugar-Free options safe?

Synthetic sweeteners have been used for decades to replace sugar in many common food and drink products. All the sweeteners used have been rigorously tested over years and the major food and health bodies across the world have certified all major synthetic sweeteners as safe for everyday use. The world's major health bodies highlight sugar-free options as a helpful substitute for sugary drinks. This is based on objective expert reviews across all of the evidence, where they have reviewed all the research as well as the strengths and weaknesses of individual studies, questions or concerns, and make recommendations based on this overview.

Sometimes the media reports the results of single studies that suggest there may be questions for example about how sugar-free drinks help people manage weight and whether synthetic sweeteners consumed in larger amounts than would be realistic in daily diets would pose a health risk. These studies are often reported or presented as if they change the overall evidence and recommendations, which is not the case. The World Health Organisation, The World Obesity Federation, and World Cancer Research Fund all identify sugary drinks as a significant cause of health problems and give their strongest recommendation that people switch away from these. Recommended substitutes include sugar-free or 'diet' drinks, water, and low-fat milk.

“Why aren't you just encouraging everyone to drink tap water?”

Tap water and low fat milk are good options and are low cost. You can also cut down on plastic bottle waste by using a reusable water bottle. However many people on the Island say they don't enjoy tap-water or don't drink milk on its own. We know that people currently do drink various flavoured drinks like diluting squash, flavoured waters, and cool drinks. Sugar-free versions of these allow you to enjoy a very similar taste without the sugar, calories and related health harm and these are highly recommended as a positive step to reducing your sugar intake.

SHG Health Directorate
24 August 2018

