



**COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY  
EXTENSION**

# Family Matters

*Improving Health Together*

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Newsletter**

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Colorado State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Colorado counties

## Healthy Alternatives to Soda By Tina Haney, CSU Extension Specialist, Gunnison County

Soda pop has been around since the early 1700's, and became popular in the United States around 1902. That's when people discovered its bubbly, refreshing, and sweet syrup taste. Yet, in recent years, research has shown the negative health impacts of drinking sugar sweetened beverages, including soda.



According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, one 12 ounce can of regular soda contains 36.8 grams (over 9 teaspoons) of sugar. Many adults and children drink several cans a day which can lead to several health issues such as obesity, diabetes and heart disease to name a few. The daily recommendation is less than 25 grams of sugar or approximately six teaspoons a day for women and children, and 36 grams or 9 teaspoons a day for men. The American Heart Association states that almost half of the added sugar in our daily diet comes from one source: sugary drinks. Truly, soda has no nutritional value.

Diet soda has also come under the radar as a risk to your health. Though you're not getting calories with diet sodas, there is a concern with artificial sweeteners such as Aspartame. This artificial sweetener is about 200 times sweeter than regular sugar causing diet soda drinkers to get their sugar fix. However, research shows that the body senses the sweet flavor and craves the calories that would normally be in that flavor, causing the drinker to crave more sweets.

You may be asking, then what can my family drink that appeals to them instead of soda? There are many options available to replace soda that are just as refreshing and are low in calories thus being a much healthier choice.



One option is to infuse water with your family's favorite fruits, vegetables, and herbs. Of course, you can find flavored waters in the stores, but many contain sugar and artificial sweeteners. You must be cautious with these as well as sports drinks and fruit juices. Check the labels on bottles to see the content of each item. If you infuse water at home, you can control the amount of natural sugar in your drinks. Ask children to share what their favorite fruit is, then help them cut it up into slices and add to an ice-cold pitcher of water.

*Helping families increase physical activity and enjoy healthy foods ...*

### Suggested Fruits and Vegetables for Infusing Water:

- Citrus fruit (lemon, limes, oranges)
- Watermelon
- Cherries
- Berries (strawberries, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries)
- Cucumber
- Herbs (mint, basil, lemon balm)



Experiment with any fruit, vegetable, or herb

Another option is to chop up fruit and place it in an ice tray with water. Freeze it and when you're ready, place the cubes in a glass of cold water. Not only will it taste great, it will also be colorful and appealing.

Try sipping on plain or flavored (but unsweetened) seltzer water to make the transition easier. Your family will get the benefit of hydration from water with the carbonation of a soda. You can also add a slice of fruit to the seltzer water for a little zing.

Finally, there's always the healthy option of tea. Simple green or black teas pack some natural health benefits and can be served hot or iced. Herbal teas also taste great chilled, with or without fruit and served over ice.

Or, make a homemade hot or iced chai by brewing spiced tea with a splash of milk.

There are many ways to make the switch from soda to water or another healthy alternative. Keep in mind that your family's health will benefit from the change.



### Let's Talk

You may also be asking how you can stop your children from drinking soda altogether. This may seem like a daunting task. Start by cutting back slowly. This will help cut down on sugar intake and slowly reduce the sugar your children are craving. Also replace sugary drinks with water by keeping a special water bottle for your child to carry where ever they go. And finally, be a role model for your children if you want them to make healthy choices with their drinks. Doing this will help you focus on keeping all of you away from

### Recipe for Health

#### Watermelon, Basil, and Strawberry Infused Water

1. Wash hands and food contact surfaces with soap and water.
2. Rinse fruit under cool running water before cutting. Cut fruit into slices that will fit in your water pitcher or glass. The amount is up to you.
3. Rinse basil under cool water. A little basil can go a long way, so start with just a few leaves.
4. For best results muddle or bruise the fruit and basil using the handle of a spatula before adding into the pitcher.
5. Add all ingredients into a pitcher, then pour in water.
6. Allow the water to infuse for a minimum of 6 hours in the refrigerator.

The longer you leave in the fruit, the stronger the flavor gets. If stored in the refrigerator, infused water should last 3-4 days. Discard the fruit after a day.

Experiment and enjoy!