

[ask the experts]

Questions on fruit juices and drinks

NOT MUCH FRUIT

? How much actual fruit is there in 'fruit juice drinks'?

The term 'fruit juice drinks' is misleading, as these drinks are not made exclusively from fruit juice. 'Juice drinks' can be made with as little as 1 per cent real fruit juice mixed with varying amounts of water. They're lower in nutrients than pure fruit juice but may have extra vitamins added.

Along with plenty of sugar, most also contain artificial sweeteners, food additives, flavours and preservatives. Diluted squash and cordial are similar in composition to a juice drink: they contain little fruit juice and lots of additives.

If you do buy fruit juice drinks, go for those that are low in sugar and have been fortified (where vitamins have been added during the manufacturing process), but check

2g per 100g less than cola. It's therefore best to limit how much your child drinks. So choose pure fruit juices which are unsweetened and avoid products with added sugars.

The Food Standards Agency recommends that children drink milk or water during the day and that they drink juice only with meals. Nutritionists also suggest diluting fruit juice with 50 per cent water to reduce the sugar intake.

THE HEAT IS ON

? What does it mean if a fruit juice has been pasteurised?

Actually, most juices are pasteurised. The process involves heating the juice to destroy potentially harmful bacteria, such as E. coli and salmonella. It also helps to prolong its shelf life. On the downside, the heating process reduces the amount of vitamin C

'Fruit juice drinks' can contain as little as 1 per cent real fruit juice

the ingredients list for unwanted additives, in case of allergies.

SUGAR, SUGAR

? I know fruit juice contains lots of sugar. Will it harm my child's teeth?

Fruit juice is a good source of vitamin C for children, but it does contain natural sugar – even pure fruit juice can contain 8.8g of sugar per 100g, which is only

and other water-soluble nutrients, and kills enzymes naturally present in some fruit that aid the absorption of vitamins.

WHAT A SOURCE

? Which juices are the best sources of vitamin C?

The fresher the juice, the more vitamin C it contains. Research has shown that vitamin C degrades with time, so



Fruit juice counts as only one of your five-a-day portions, however much of it you drink

One portion is all you'll get

? We're always hearing about the benefits of having five portions of fruit and veg a day. Can I get all five portions from fruit juice?

No. One 150ml glass of 100 per cent fruit or vegetable juice, or a smoothie, counts as one portion of your five-a-day fruit or veg. You might assume from that that drinking five glasses will take you to your five portions. But the juicing process reduces

fibre content, which means you don't get the same nutritional benefits from juice as you do from whole fruit and vegetables. Because of this, fruit juice (and smoothies) can't make up more than one portion a day – no matter how much of them you drink.

So if you come across claims on cartons or bottles to the contrary, it's best to take them with a pinch of salt.

unless they have been fortified, long-life juices tend to contain less. To get lots of nutrients without unnecessary ingredients, look for freshly-squeezed juices made from 100 per cent juice or go to juice bars that make drinks from whole fruits while you wait. Alternatively, make your own.

CONCENTRATE

? How do freshly-squeezed juice and juice made from concentrate differ?

Both contain 100 per cent juice. But freshly-squeezed juice is produced directly from fruit and sent straight to the shops. With juice made from concentrate,

the juice is heated so that all the water evaporates, which may lead to the loss of some water-soluble nutrients, such as vitamin C. The concentrate is frozen for transportation. Once it reaches its destination, the same amount of water that was lost through evaporation is put back to return the concentrate to its original state.

Freshly-squeezed juice has a shorter shelf life (the Food Standards Agency recommends no more than two weeks between the date of extraction and the use-by date) and, unlike juice from concentrate,

you'll normally find it in the chiller cabinets. It's also more expensive because the costs of getting it to us are higher – in fact, the idea of concentrating juice was developed to reduce transport costs. Some people also find that it tastes different.

Fruit juice made from concentrate must be clearly labelled as such.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Which? reports 'Behind the labels' October 2003, p16
'Juicy fruit' July 2004, p20

Food Standards Agency
www.eatwell.gov.uk