Healthy Eating

Trade Soda for Natural Juices

By Kari Bachman

We buy them from vending machines at work. We order them at restaurants. We drink them in the car. We sip on them while watching television.

In the U.S., we drink 2 to 3 sodas every day. In moderation, soda is not bad for our health. But it’s a source of empty calories and we drink it far too much.

Years ago, consumers mostly drank sodas at special events. But today, soda is available everywhere and is a constant temptation wherever we go. We’ve grown used to drinking it all day long.

The more we drink soda, the less we drink nutritious beverages like milk and natural juices. That means less calcium and Vitamin C, which our bodies need.

Sodas don’t fill us up as much as solid food, which means we can drink a lot of them without realizing. That contributes to weight gain.

It’s a challenge to change our habits. Trying to go cold turkey may be too difficult. Try making small, gradual changes:

- Limit the amount of soda you buy each week.
- Buy small cans of soda instead of large bottles.
- When buying soda, choose a small size cup instead of extra large.
- Try diet sodas. They’re a healthier selection for people with diabetes, because they have few carbohydrates.

Try reviving the tradition of homemade drinks. It takes little time to prepare homemade juices and other beverages such as fruit-based milk drinks or tea. Many of these drinks are so simple kids can make them.

Our mothers and grandmothers used many different fruits vegetables like melon and carrots, plus ingredients like hibiscus flowers, to make delicious drinks. Perhaps they used too much sugar in those days, but we can still prepare them using less sugar or alternative sweeteners.

Increasing consumption of these drinks will help us stay healthy, save money and allow old culinary traditions to persist.

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