

[IMAGE]

The Skinny on Juice

By Editorial Staff

Scan the grocery store shelves and you'll find a variety of juices on display. The old favorites still remain - apple, orange and grape - but you'll also see some new flavors these days, such as blueberry-pomegranate, cranberry-raspberry, guava and even "lychee" (an edible fruit native to the Kwangtung and Fukein provinces of China).

Juice can provide many health benefits, especially for those trying to squeeze in the recommended number of servings. Just 6 ounces or $\frac{3}{4}$ of a cup of 100-percent fruit juice can equal one serving of a fruit or vegetable. Fruit juices can contain a number of important vitamins and nutrients our bodies need including potassium, antioxidants and vitamins A and C.

It's important to read the labels as you make your juice selection. You want to look for labels that say "100% juice." Only juice with this on the label can truly be considered juice. Anything less than 100-percent juice means the drink must clearly be labeled a juice "drink," "beverage," "cocktail," "punch," "blend" or "sparkler." These products might contain as little as 10 percent or as much as 99 percent juice. The rest of the ingredients might include artificial sweeteners, sugar or other artificial ingredients. Review the list of ingredients on the products. Ingredients must be listed in order of volume. The farther down the list of ingredients juice appears, the less there is of it in the drink.

- Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark In your grocer's freezer section, you'll find juices from concentrate. These are the same as the original juice, except most of the water has been removed. Once you add the water back in, the juice has the same nutritional profile as it does in its original form. Many people think fresh-squeezed juice offers a nutritional advantage and some experts might agree. However, the important thing is to realize that the goal is to incorporate the right amount of fruits and vegetables into your diet, and when juice is consumed as part of a well-balanced diet, this can be achieved without consuming fresh-squeezed juice all the time.

Some juice is fortified with extra vitamins, minerals, cholesterol-lowering sterols and omega-3 fatty acids - something to consider if you aren't getting enough of any of these nutrients in your normal diet. Recent

research indicates certain juices also might help in protecting against certain health conditions and diseases. Pomegranate juice has been shown to lower total cholesterol and reduce systolic blood pressure, while cranberry juice helps women maintain proper urinary tract health.

Check with your doctor to make sure certain juices won't interfere with any prescription medication you're taking. For example, grapefruit contains a natural substance that inhibits the liver's ability to metabolize certain drugs. These restrictions aside, 100-percent juice is a great way to get those recommended daily servings of fruits (and vegetables) into your diet.

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