



Can fruit juice ever really be healthy?

Some juices can be a source of concentrated sugars in the diet. Vegetable juices generally give you a significant dose of nutrients.

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Monday 24 February 2025

Summer might be nearly over, but the warm weather will continue for some time. So, whether you need to quench your thirst after working out or want an alternative to alcohol when dining out, a cold, freshly squeezed juice will still hit the spot.

Often regarded as a healthy option, recent research has suggested that the health benefits of consuming 100 per cent fruit juice outweigh any risks.

Despite this, the reality is that fruit juice is a concentrated source of sugars, and while there are some juices associated with specific health benefits, if you are really looking for the health-related benefits of juice, vegetable-based options are generally far superior, if you can find them.

What is the nutritional profile of juice?

While there are many different varieties of juice in the supermarket - ranging from fresh to cold-pressed to mixed fruit and vegetable - closer inspection will reveal that nutritionally they are pretty similar.

Most are largely fruit-based, even ones with vegetables added, and per serve they offer 18-25g of sugars. While this is comparable to what you get if you physically eat a piece of fruit, in the case of juice you do not get the dietary fibre, or "full factor" that you get from eating a whole piece of food.

From a nutrient perspective, juice does offer a concentrated source of vitamin C, with a single glass of orange juice offering the entire daily recommended intake of this water-soluble vitamin that plays a key role in immune function.

Research on fruit juice consumption

For many years fruit juice was closely linked to weight gain, in the same way as other sugary drinks such as soft drink, especially in

children. A more recent review of fruit juice consumption published in the journal *Nutrition Reviews* has shown the health benefits of fruit juice consumption, which include lower levels of inflammation in the body, outweigh the potential negatives. However, this review is broad and does not specifically examine the link between the regular intake of fruit juice, body weight and blood glucose levels.

For both weight and blood glucose control, it is recommended that the dietary intake of concentrated sugars be minimised in the diet, and as such fruit juice avoided.

Are vegetable-based juices superior?

The main difference between fruit juice and vegetable juice is that vegetable-based juice tends to be lower in overall sugars and higher in key nutrients, especially dietary fibre if whole vegetables are juiced.

Vegetable juices generally give you a significant dose of nutrients, including potassium, with roughly half the sugars of whole fruit juice. The downside is that 100 per cent vegetable juices are hard to find, expensive and not always palatable.

Are there juices with health benefits?

A number of juices have specific health-related benefits. Beetroot juice has been used by cyclists for some time to improve performance times thanks to the effects of the nitrates it contains. Nitrates help to dilate blood vessels, improving blood flow and helping to lower blood pressure.

Juices with an especially high number of antioxidants, including pomegranate and cherry, have been shown to reduce levels of inflammation in the body and can have pain-reducing effects for sufferers of arthritis. And 100 per cent vegetable juices help to reduce fluid levels and blood pressure thanks to the especially high amounts of potassium.

The take-home message

Like many foods, when consumed in moderation, 100 per cent fruit juice is unlikely to be any cause for concern. But it's much better to drink 100 per cent vegetable juice, if you can make it or find it locally.

For those with high blood pressure or inflammation, it is certainly worth adding in a daily serve of beetroot or pomegranate juice for the potential benefits. But do not assume that a colourful juice you find in supermarkets is healthy, as it most likely has a base of orange or apple juice that is adding extra sugars to your diet.