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GRAHAK SATHI

Beware of High Sugar in your Summer Drinks



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You want to drink or eat something cold all the time in summer, be it the large variety of bottled fizzy and cold soft drinks, fruit juices, sharbats, or cold drinks made from instant drink concentrates etc. Also, summers are the season for the mangoes and Aamras is a food of choice for one and all.

Over a period, CERC has tested many such foods and beverages for their sugar, salt, and fat content to find out if their consumption is healthy for you. Here we bring you laboratory test findings about the sugar content of some of these products that may be on your buying list this summer. Find out if consuming these is healthful or not for you and your family.



RDA for sugar

As per the manual of Dietary Guidelines for Indians, 2011 by National Institute of Nutrition (NIN), Hyderabad, the Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) per day for Sugar for a balanced diet for adults with sedentary to moderate activity is 20g to 30g.

FSSAI Guidelines for High Fat, Sugar, Salt (HFSS) foods

According to Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) Guidelines on Fat, Sugar and Salt, a food product containing –

- salt more than 1.5g/100g (600mg sodium) is considered High Salt product
- sugar more than 22.5g/100g is considered as High Sugar product
- fat more than 17.5g/100g is considered High Fat product

You should always check the nutrition information on packaged food products before buying to know if it is a high fat, sugar or salt food. Avoid buying packs which do not have this information.



Aamras

Mango season is in full swing and most people are consuming Aamras every day. It is made from pulp or puree of ripe mangoes with sugar usually added to sweeten it. Ready to eat Aamras is sold in mithai shops and dairies etc. in loose or packaged form. Many temporary shops set up in tents also sell loose Aamras.

We had tested six samples of Aamras for their sugar content - three samples of branded Aamras and three samples of loose Aamras.

- Sugar content was found to be high in all 6 Aamras samples. The sugar content in all tested samples ranged from 11.60g/100g to 18.38g/100g.
- Two branded Aamras samples had the highest sugar at 17.75g/100g and 18.38g/100g. These amounts are close to the daily RDA for sugar for sedentary lifestyles (20g). Hence consumption of such high sugar Aamras can have adverse health effects and should be avoided.
- It was observed that Sugar content was higher in the branded Aamras samples than in the loose samples.
- Only one branded sample mentioned Ingredients and Nutrition Information on its label. There is no way of knowing what the loose samples contained since they are not labelled.

It is advisable to make Aamras at home to ensure that you are consuming safe and hygienically prepared Aamras. You can also avoid adding extra sugar.



Tips for buying Aamras

- Always purchase Aamras which has good packaging from a reputed shop or brand.
- Buy from a popular shop to ensure freshness and quality.
- When buying packaged Aamras, check for all labelling information on the pack like MRP, packed date, best before date, batch no., manufacturing address etc.



- If the best before date shows a long shelf life, it indicates that it has preservatives. Avoid such a brand.
- Aamras having no label information should be avoided.
- If the label does not give nutrition information, you will not know the sugar content. Such products should be avoided.
- Avoid buying loose Aamras. If you still buy loose Aamras, check for its consistency. If it is too thin and runny, it may be adulterated with water. Contaminated water is a major reason behind water borne diseases such typhoid, jaundice and diarrhea.
- Avoid buying brightly coloured loose Aamras as it can contain synthetic food colours.
- If there is a slight bitter aftertaste after eating the Aamras, it may contain artificial sweeteners.
- Look for zero added sugar variety if available to control your sugar intake. You can always add sugar at home.

Packaged fruit juices

It is commonly believed that fruit juices are healthy. It may not be easy or affordable to drink fresh fruit juice frequently but packaged juices are available everywhere and quite affordable. These are widely consumed for breakfast or as refreshment and even given for nutrition to people who have been sick. But do you know what they contain and if they are beneficial for health?

We had tested 5 brands of packaged Mixed Fruit Juice and 5 brands of packaged Orange Juice as these are popular varieties among Ready to Serve Fruit Juices and Beverages. Although commonly believed that fruit juices are healthy, it was found that packaged juices were high in sugar making them not a healthy food choice.

Mixed Fruit Juice - Sugar content in all brands of packaged Mixed Fruit Juice tested ranged from 10.51g/100ml to 22.86g/100ml. Hence all of these had sugar more than 10g/100ml.

Considering NIN recommended daily RDA of sugar of 20g for sedentary lifestyles, anyone consuming one glass (200 ml) of such packed Mixed Fruit juices will consume more than their daily RDA of sugar from it. Any additional consumption of sugar will increase their sugar intake very much, which can be unhealthy.



Orange Juice - As per tests, sugar in all 5 brands ranged between 8.02g/100ml to 12.13g/100ml. Two brands had sugar more than 10g/100ml. Thus, anyone consuming one glass (200 ml) of such packed orange juice will consume most of their daily RDA of sugar from it.



Tips for consumption

- Always look out for the total sugar content (natural and added sugars) on the package label.
- Remember that the Glycemic Index of certain fruits is higher than others, so choose your fruit juice accordingly.
- Do not consume packaged juice directly from packet. Pour in a transparent glass and check for any visible contamination, haziness, foul odour or uneven coloration.
- Once opened, the package should be stored in refrigerator to avoid spoilage.
- Avoid consuming packaged fruit juices to limit your sugar intake as they are often high in sugar.
- Opt for freshly made juice from fresh fruits instead of packaged fruit juices. However, it is best to eat the whole fruit instead of juicing it.
- Do not consume or serve packaged fruit juices to your children very often.



Instant Drink Concentrates, Sharbats, Syrups



With the awareness that colas and other soft drinks are not good for health, sharbats, syrups and instant drink mixes have become even more popular as they provide convenience and taste and are also more affordable compared to fruit juices.

We examined a variety of such products for what they contain. A study of nutrition table and ingredients list as per labels was done to find out how much sugar they contain. We selected 12 different brands which included Instant Drink Concentrate Mixes, Sharbats, Fruit Crush, Nannari Syrup, Thandai syrup, and Squashes.

- All 12 brands of different drink concentrates were very high in sugar content and contained sugar more than 22.5g/100g (or 100ml). Therefore, all these products are High Sugar products as per FSSAI guidelines for High Sugar food products.
- A Roohafza Sharbat had the highest sugar content of 103.5g/100ml as per label Nutritional table.
- An instant drink mix was also very high in sugar with 92.9g/100g sugar.
- Lowest sugar was found in a fruit crush brand - 37.21g/100g.
- A Nannari syrup brand had 58g/100ml sugar whereas one orange squash had 52g/100ml sugar.
- The other 7 products studied had sugar ranging from 68g/100ml to 83.4g/100ml.

Tips for consumption

- It is advisable to consume homemade cool drinks where you can either eliminate sugar or reduce its quantity. Good options include chhaas, lassi, nimbu pani, aam panna, jaljeera, etc. They are quite easy to make and extremely affordable. Moreover, they do not harm your health.
- If you must consume cool drinks made from packaged mixes, try to use more water for dilution to reduce the sugar intake per serving.
- Adding milk where possible helps to add nutrition to the drink.



- Avoid adding syrups directly as toppings to already sweet desserts like ice-cream, kulfi etc. This increases your sugar intake too much and can adversely affect your health.
- Commercially available drinks contain additives like colouring agents, preservatives, sweeteners and flavours which are harmful to health. Hence consumption of these drinks should be avoided.
- Always check for the Sugar content on label. High sugar intake can lead to many health problems.
- Do not consume or serve cold drinks made from instant mixes, concentrate or syrups to your children very often.

About CERC

Consumer Rights protection and justice for consumers have been the focus of Consumer Education and Research Centre (CERC) right from its inception in 1978. CERC is India's only Consumer Rights Organisation that provides 360 degree service to the consumer in terms of Education, Empowerment and Protection.

A broad range of activities are undertaken in the organization – grievance redressal through mediation and litigation, consumer education and awareness building through various publications and outreach activities, testing and analysis of consumer products in our in-house product testing laboratories, advocacy for laws and regulations that better protect consumers, as well as a number of projects executed in various areas pertinent to consumer protection and empowerment. Promoting sustainable consumption too is a major area of activity in CERC

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