



**HEALTHY
KANSAS
HOSPITALS**

HEALTHY OPTIONS ARE THE ROUTINE, EASY CHOICE.



Hospitals Adopt Healthier Beverage Policies

Many hospitals are implementing healthier beverage policies, replacing sugary drinks with healthier options in their vending machines, fountains, catering and other areas. **Tap water and unsweetened low-fat/nonfat milk are the healthiest replacements for sugary drinks and contribute to the body’s daily nutrient needs.** Unsweetened coffee and tea, and 100 percent fruit or vegetable juices (in appropriate serving sizes with moderate sodium content, if applicable) also rank high as healthy beverage options.

In developing healthier beverage policies, the question of whether to include beverages sweetened with artificial or non-caloric sweeteners comes up. Some hospitals include these “diet drinks” in their healthier beverage options, based on their desire to offer a wide range of options and their belief that “diet drinks” are preferable to sugary beverages in terms of calories and carbohydrate intake. While federal regulations allow the use of artificial sweeteners, there is no conclusive research to say whether diet drinks and artificial sweeteners are safe to consume or what, if any, influence they have on obesity and chronic diseases. Switching from sugary beverages to diet drinks may reduce calorie consumption and contribute to short-term weight loss. But calorie consumption is not the only concern, and more research is needed.

Are Diet Beverages Acceptable?

What Are Artificial Sweeteners?

The term “artificial sweeteners” refers to all substances, including those derived from stevia or sugar alcohols, added to food and drinks to make them taste sweeter, without adding other nutrients or calories (or only a few calories). Some experts also refer to these as “non-nutritive sweeteners” or low calorie or non-caloric sweeteners. Most artificial sweeteners have a higher intensity of sweetness per gram compared to sugar, offering roughly 150 to more than 600 times the sweetness of sugar with no or few calories. Artificial sweeteners are used in “diet” and other beverages and food products to reduce the number of calories and carbohydrates in these products.

Do Diet Drinks Really Help You Lose Weight?

Research consistently has shown, and most authorities agree, that individuals who switch from sugary to artificially sweetened drinks do reduce their calorie intake from beverages. However, some research also shows that individuals drinking artificially sweetened beverages may consume many additional calories through other food and beverages, ultimately nullifying the overall calorie reduction achieved by drinking a “diet” beverage.

A growing body of research suggests that drinking beverages with artificial sweeteners actually may be detrimental to reducing preferences for sugary foods. Sweet cravings are natural and the amplified sweet taste of artificially sweetened beverages may increase a person’s inclination for sugary and sweet-tasting foods or beverages over time, potentially undermining weight loss efforts.

How Are Artificial Sweeteners Regulated?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulates substances added to foods and beverages – including artificial sweeteners – through food additive regulations. The FDA has issued food additive regulations for at least seven artificial sweeteners. The regulations specify how these substances may be used, including in what types of food, in what quantities and for what uses.

The FDA also allows substances that are “generally recognized as safe” (GRAS) to be used in food. More than a dozen companies have submitted notices to the FDA that stevia-based sweeteners are GRAS, and the FDA has not questioned these determinations.

ARTIFICIAL SWEETENERS WITH FOOD ADDITIVE REGULATIONS

- acesulfame-potassium
- aspartame
- mannitol
- neotame
- saccharin
- sucralose
- xylitol



The Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation of the Kansas Hospital Association has created a series of resources designed to inform and support efforts to promote healthy food and beverage environments in Kansas hospitals. The Public Health Law Center assisted in creating this document. These resources are funded by the Kansas Health Foundation. Footnotes providing reference materials are available online at www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org.

What You Drink Makes a Difference

Are Any Health Risks Associated with Using Artificial Sweeteners?

The National Cancer Institute has stated that it has “no clear evidence” of a link between artificial sweeteners available in the U.S. and the risk of cancer. In 2012, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics said that consumers can “safely enjoy” a range of nutritive and non-nutritive sweeteners within an eating plan that follows federal nutritional recommendations, such as the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the Dietary Reference Intakes. Research is mixed about a potential link between artificial sweeteners and the risk of certain chronic diseases.

Is It Safe for Children to Consume Artificial Sweeteners?

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Healthy Eating Research Program convened an expert panel to develop a set of healthy beverage guidelines. These guidelines do not recommend beverages with added sweeteners (whether caloric or non-caloric) for children under 14 years old. For older youth, the only consensus is that water and milk continue to be the best healthy options.

The Institute of Medicine’s recommended standards for foods and beverages sold or served in schools include artificially sweetened beverages as an option only for high school-aged youth, after the school day ends.

U.S. Department of Agriculture regulations do not allow drinks with added sugars or artificially sweetened drinks to be sold in elementary and middle schools, or through the National School Lunch and Breakfast programs. However, in a rule that took effect in July 2014, the U.S.D.A. does allow artificially sweetened beverages (within specified size and calorie limits) to be sold in high schools but not as part of national school meal programs.

States may pass their own school food regulations that are more restrictive than federal law.

What Is the Best Approach?

The healthiest beverage choices continue to be water and low- and nonfat milk. Although the federal government and expert panels have deemed some artificial sweeteners safe from a food safety perspective, the science is not conclusive when it comes to other health impacts from drinking artificially sweetened beverages. When it comes to sugary beverages, the science is clear that they have contributed to the obesity epidemic and also are linked with serious chronic diseases including diabetes and heart disease.

STOP. RETHINK YOUR DRINK. GO ON GREEN.



Red - Drink Rarely, If At All

- Regular sodas
- Energy or sports drinks
- Fruit drinks



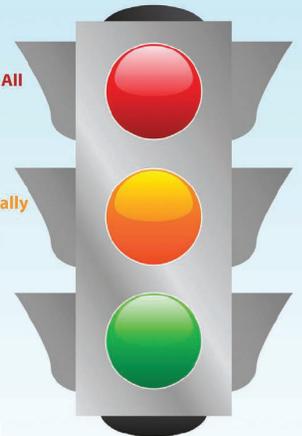
Yellow - Drink Occasionally

- Diet soda
- Low-calorie, low-sugar drinks
- 100% juice



Green - Drink Plenty

- Water
- Seltzer water
- Skim or 1% milk



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Leading the way to improve food and beverage environments in Kansas hospitals.

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WHAT APPROACH SHOULD HOSPITALS USE TO DEVELOP A HEALTHIER BEVERAGE POLICY?

Hospitals can choose from a variety of approaches. Most hospitals continue to offer artificially sweetened drinks, but do not include them in the “healthy” beverage category. Another option is to continue to offer artificially sweetened beverages in certain outlets such as cafeterias, but perhaps not in vending machines or gift stores. A number of hospitals use a “red, yellow and green” labeling system that includes artificially sweetened beverages as a “yellow” option in all outlets, and may give these products less favorable pricing or placement compared to “green” options such as water or unsweetened milk. A hospital could choose to not sell beverages with artificial sweeteners and focus only on healthy offerings, such as tap water, infused water, bottled water, carbonated waters, low- and nonfat milk, 100 percent juices and unsweetened coffee and teas. Hospitals should consider their culture and the dynamics of the institution in deciding on a “healthier beverage” policy.

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