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# Sip your way to better health

Jul 26 | By Sharon Liao

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You already know that the right route to fueling your body is feasting on salads and snacking on fruit. Even so, chances are that still doesn't cut it. Some 89 percent of Americans don't reach the bare minimum of five servings of produce a day, according to a study in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine. That's when juice can come to the rescue. A six-ounce glass puts you one serving closer to that target.

"The vitamins and minerals in juice are easily absorbed by the body, which is key for athletes," said Sharon Richter, R.D., a nutritionist in New York City. If you scale back on high-fiber foods before a long run or race, consider sipping more of your fruits and veggies. "Paired with a little protein, juice also makes for a quick and easy recovery snack," she added.

For the biggest bang for your gulp, look for brands that contain no added sugar. At juice bars, opt for cold-pressed beverages, which have been processed without heat and pack in more nutrients. "And keep the calorie content -- about 100 per cup -- in mind," Richter said. While you can't go wrong with any 100 percent juice, there are certain kinds, like these, that can help you train longer and stronger. Bottoms up!

Cherry: The key to a faster recovery may be a glass full of cherries. Researchers from Oregon Health & Science University found that runners who sipped cherry juice before long runs felt about 20 percent less pain

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What's more, athletes who drank an ounce of the juice twice a day before a tough strength workout recovered more quickly than those who didn't. Experts say the beneficial effect can be chalked up to antioxidants in cherries called anthocyanins, which protect against muscle damage and reduce inflammation.

Pineapple: It's not just for pina colodas! A cup of the juice fulfills nearly 10 percent of your daily requirement of thiamin, a B vitamin that helps the body convert carbs into energy. It's also high in bromelain, an enzyme that has been shown to ease muscle soreness. Because pineapple is naturally higher in sugar than most other fruits, use the juice to sweeten other varieties, such as veggie or tart cranberry drinks.

Veggie: When you think of an electrolyte drink, tomato juice probably isn't the first thing that comes to mind. But it counts as one. A glass of the stuff serves up more potassium than a banana or OJ, and gives you a bit of

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Plus, the types of vegetables used in veggie juice cocktails, like carrots, spinach and kale, serve up plenty of vitamins A, C and K. Making your own mix? "If you're adding cruciferous vegetables, like kale, steam them lightly first," said Ashley Koff, R.D., an espnW.com contributor and celebrity nutritionist. "You'll get more of the healthy nutrients, like B vitamins, than if you juice them raw."

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Berry: "Berries of all kinds, including cranberries and blueberries, are top antioxidant sources," said Richter. "They can help repair damaged muscles." And besides quenching your thirst on a hot day, research suggests that their juice may help you work out in steamy temps. A study in the journal Nutrition Research found that athletes who took a blueberry supplement before running in 95-degree heat experienced less muscle breakdown than those who didn't. Bonus: Cranberry juice is proven to protect against pesky urinary tract infections, which can plague athletes during the summer.

Beet: Sipping this earthy-tasting juice may improve your endurance by up to 16 percent, according to researchers from Britain's University of Exeter. That's because it contains energy-boosting iron and nitrates, compounds that ups blood flow to the muscles, they explained. If you can't stomach the flavor, try creating a juice cocktail: Mix beet juice with a sweet, mild juice, such as apple or carrot, for a tastier blend.



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