

Script – Broadcast – Smoothies and your health: Are they as good as they seem?

INTRO

Smoothies are a popular meal replacement or snack, and when made with fruit, veggies, yogurt and healthy fats that are good for you, they can be healthy.

But there are a few things to keep in mind before loading up the blender, says Nicole O'Neill, a dietitian with OSF HealthCare.

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Nicole O'Neill, dietitian, OSF HealthCare

"The tricky thing is a lot of smoothies are pretty one dimensional and or the wrong size. So, my number one thought is, deconstruct your smoothie and put it on a plate. If you put it on a plate and you look at that plate and go, 'Whoa, that's too much.' Then that means your smoothies is too much."
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Smoothies usually come in 16 to 32-ounce (475–945-mL) servings.

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There's a misconception that smoothies are low in calories, but some drinks pack over a whopping 1,000 calories, depending on their size and ingredients. O'Neill says usually, a 100–200-calorie smoothie with 10 grams of protein is a great snack, and a 400–800-calorie smoothie with at least 20 grams of protein is a better option as a meal replacement.

Smoothies high in protein and fiber may also help with weight loss by keeping you full. O'Neill suggests cutting a smoothie recipe in half if you're trying to create a calorie deficit.

While there are many different ingredients you can use, there are three main types of smoothies.

- **Fruit smoothies.** This smoothie usually features one or more fruits like berries, banana or pineapple and is blended with fruit juice, water or milk.
- **Green smoothies.** Green smoothies pack leafy green vegetables like kale or spinach and fruit blended with water, juice or milk. They tend to include more veggies than regular smoothies.
- **Protein smoothies.** Protein smoothies usually include one fruit or vegetable and a liquid, plus a protein source such as Greek yogurt, cottage cheese or protein powder. The daily recommendation of protein is 60 grams.

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The biggest downside of drinking smoothies is added sugar. Protein powder, flavored yogurt, sugar-sweetened juices and nondairy milks are all potential sources of added sugar.

The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugar to no more than 9 teaspoons (37.5 grams) per day for men and 6 teaspoons (25 grams) per day for women. When making smoothies at home, use whole fruits, such as a banana, instead of honey or maple syrup for added sweetness.

O'Neill says the bottom line is smoothies have a place in our diets with certain limitations. She says one smoothie a day is perfect for a meal replacement, especially for people on the go. Just make sure you're getting the nutrients you need for the entire day.