



# THE DO'S AND DON'TS of *Summer Smoothies* to Stay Refreshed

*by Jennifer Johnston, MA, RD, CSOWM*

**Summer is around the corner!** Along with the heat of summer comes tasty frozen treats to help us stay refreshed and cool. Unfortunately, many of these “treats” are loaded with sugar and calories. While it’s important to treat yourself on your weight-loss journey, remember to do it smartly.

When everyone around you is sipping milkshakes, licking ice cream cones and slurping smoothies, it’s natural to want to join in. Luckily, following a few simple guidelines will help keep the calories in check while enjoying those long summer days!



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# Smoothies 101



Smoothies mean different things to different people. According to the Merriam Webster Dictionary, a smoothie is defined as “a creamy beverage made of fruit blended with juice, milk or yogurt.” That means your drink can range from a healthy-leaning snack option to a calorie-rich dessert.

Dietitians often shake their heads at smoothies. They imagine the fat, sugar and calorie content, while the rest of us get excited at the thought of a fun, colorful, so-called healthy drink. After all, smoothies have fruit and fruit is good for you! Don't let your smoothie derail your weight-loss efforts. There are healthier options, but they are harder to find among the smoothie shops near your office or at the mall.

Did you know that a small peach mango smoothie at Jamba Juice has 300 calories and 41 grams of sugar? Make that a large and you're looking at 460 calories and 71 grams of sugar! That's the same amount of sugar as eating 109 Starburst fruit chews. You wouldn't eat that much sugar, so why drink it?

## How do you enjoy your smoothie while keeping nutrition and calories in check?

- ✓ **Make it yourself:** Not only do you know exactly what is going into your smoothie (*fruit versus fruit juice, for instance*), but you can control the volume you are drinking.
- ✓ **Watch the portion size:** Not everyone needs a 32-ounce beverage with a meal's worth of calories. An eight-ounce smoothie may do the trick.
- ✓ **Pump up the protein:** Using some filling protein will help your creation keep you satisfied and prevent blood sugar spikes, especially for bariatric surgery patients. Don't forget that liquid calories can easily sabotage weight-loss efforts. Adding protein, which takes longer for the body to digest, can be what takes your smoothie from liquid sugar to satisfying snack.

For a healthy protein boost, try an unflavored protein such as Genepro, or a flavored one like Unjury or Nectar. Another easy way to increase the protein is to use one of the newer, ultra-filtered dairy products. Kroger's CarbMaster milk and Fairlife milk are both lactose-free and have 11 grams (*CarbMaster*) and 13 grams (*Fairlife*) of protein in eight ounces. A glass of skim milk will give you eight grams of protein in eight ounces.

- ✓ **Fill up with fiber:** Although whole fruit is usually recommended, using high-fiber fruits such as berries will give you an edge. These fruits can help you feel full sooner and longer. For someone whose weight-loss plan does not allow many fruits or vegetables, this can be a fun way to fit them in.

- ✓ **Don't forget your veggies:** Adding kale, spinach or other vegetables can help boost the nutrition of a smoothie and add to the thick texture without needing ice cream, sherbet or other sugary thickeners. Eating your veggies will always be more filling than drinking them, but if you are one who stays away from vegetables due to portion size or preference, adding them to your smoothie is a great way to get some extra vitamins and minerals.

- ✓ **Toss the temptations:** It's easy to add juice, ice cream, sherbet and high calorie syrups to flavor your smoothie. Get creative! Find sugar-free syrups like Torani, toss in a few teaspoons of sugar-free gelatin or use flavor extracts like almond, orange or mint to add flavor. The great thing about these options is that you can adjust the flavor to your preference. Let those creative juices flow and keep the sugary juices away!





# Refreshing Berry Smoothie

(makes one 16-ounce smoothie)

## Ingredients:

- ½ cup strawberries, quartered
- ½ cup blueberries
- 1 cup fat-free Fairlife milk
- ½ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 cup fresh spinach leaves
- 1 tablespoon ground flax seeds
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

## Directions:

Blend to desired consistency. Add ice if you want a thicker shake.

### Nutrition Facts:

257 calories  
2 grams fat  
27 grams carbohydrate  
20 grams sugar (0 grams added sugar)  
28.5 grams protein  
6 grams fiber



## How to Find a Healthier Smoothie

Weight-loss can be hard to navigate because there is a lot of conflicting information. It's easy to think that a smoothie is the way to go. But buyer beware—a calorie bomb of a smoothie (*or milkshake*) is just as easy to make or buy as a high-protein, low-sugar beverage. Be cautious of smoothies advertising no added sugar. These are often made with juice, which while not using added sugars, can still contain hundreds of sugary calories. Advertising can be misleading. For example: Bolthouse Farms Lower Sugar Strawberry Banana Smoothie still has 26 grams of sugar. So, before you order-up a refreshing summer smoothie, do some research so you can enjoy it guilt-free.

## Do:

- ✓ Research menus ahead of time. Many restaurants post their nutrition information online to help you make informed choices.
- ✓ Ask to add or subtract ingredients based on your needs.
- ✓ Be cautious of portion size.
- ✓ Make your own if possible.
- ✓ Watch for words like “protein,” “fresh,” “healthy,” “light,” “gluten free,” “paleo,” “keto” and “juice.” These terms are used to reel you in, but they don't always mean what you think.

## Don't:

- ✗ Let advertising and buzzwords trick you.
- ✗ Feel like you have to choose one of the pre-made products on the menu board.
- ✗ Feel as if you must finish what you order. It may be enough to have leftovers!



## Conclusion

Now that you know the basics of what to look for, how to choose healthier ingredients, how to order a smoothie that fits in your plan and a recipe to try at home; it's time to sit back, relax and enjoy a refreshing summertime treat!

### About the Author:

Jennifer Johnston, MA, RD, CSOWM, is a registered dietitian with Community Health Network in Indianapolis, Indiana. She has been working as a bariatric dietitian since 2010. Jenny is an active member of the Indianapolis Walk from Obesity committee, the Indiana state chapter of the American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery (ASMBS) and is also a Certified Specialist in Obesity and Weight Management. She enjoys helping patients get back on track after bariatric surgery and seeing the positive changes in her patients' lives.