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Secrets to healthy summer smoothies

July 03, 2012 | By Anna Bondy, Special to The Baltimore Sun

Each week a nutritionist from the University of Maryland Medical Center provides a weekly guest post. This week, Anna Bondy, dietetic intern, weighs in on summer smoothies.

When the weather gets warmer, there is nothing more refreshing than a summer smoothie.

But not all smoothies are created equal. You may be surprised to find caffeine, sugar or even herbal supplements in some versions. Whether you're buying a smoothie at your gym, in the mall or as a meal replacement, be an informed consumer. Check the ingredient list and, if possible, compare serving sizes and calorie information.

Consider that many store-bought smoothies:

- Are often full of added sugars. The natural sugar in fruit comes with vitamins and phytonutrients, but sugar from turbinado, honey or agave does not carry these added benefits.

May be low in sugar but use sugar substitutes. Go to the website of the [American Diabetes Association](#) to help you make choices based on your personal goals.

- Can have distorted portion sizes. Smoothies chosen as between-meal snacks should carry fewer than 300 calories.

- May use fruit juices or fruit sorbet. Try to pick options made with real fruit.

Most smoothies can be customized, and you can add or subtract ingredients to meet your needs. The following commercial smoothies can be a beneficial choice:

- Jamba Juice's Probiotic Fruit & Yogurt Blends, made with nonfat yogurt, soy milk and whole fruit, are a good source of calcium with 230-250 calories for a small.

- At Smoothie King, you can ask to "make it skinny," and they will leave out the added sugar. Don't be afraid to ask for a kid's size, which is 12 ounces and 265 calories.

- At Freshens, the Jamaican Jammer (290 calories) or Strawberry Squeeze (250 calories) are nutritious options made with yogurt and whole fruit.

The best smoothie is often the one made at home. You control what goes into it and you can make appropriate serving sizes and add sweetener to your taste. Below is a quick guide to get you started making smoothies at home. Pick at least one ingredient from each section, but feel free to double up on fruits and veggies:

Base: 1 cup low-fat milk or milk substitute (100-110 calories), 6 ounces low-fat yogurt or Greek yogurt (105-180 calories) or 1 cup chilled green tea or coffee (5 calories).

Fruits: 1/2 Half a banana, half a cup diced apple, peaches or cup berries.

Vegetables: 1 cup baby spinach, 1 medium sliced carrot or a quarter of a medium-size avocado.

Extras: 1 teaspoon of flax seeds, 1 tablespoon of wheat germ or cocoa powder, 2 tablesspoons of fresh mint, 1 tablespoon of lime juice, 1/8 tsp, cinnamon, Splenda/ Stevia/ Equal/ Sweet'N Low to taste

For example, you could combine 6 ounces of nonfat vanilla Greek yogurt with half a cup of peaches and half a cup of strawberries, then garnish it with some mint for 180 calories and 81 percent of your daily value of vitamin C.

So next time you're craving a cool summer smoothie, choose to make it with whole fruit, less added sugar and reasonable portions.

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