Slam Dunks

This summer, quench your thirst the right way.

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From Dwayne Wade to Naomi Campbell to 50 Cent, many black athletes and celebrities are endorsing nonalcoholic beverages like flavored waters and sports drinks. They claim that these products will satisfy our taste buds while also quenching our thirst. (Most people need about 64 ounces of fluid each day, but in summer, many of us need more.) So are these beverages healthy alternatives to the soda and plain water they're intended to replace—or are their health claims mere marketing gimmicks? And what do we need to watch out for? "Some of these drinks are loaded with sugar equal to that of a soda," says nutritionist Goulda Downer of Metroplex Health and Nutrition Services in Washington, DC. *Real Health* gives you the real deal on how to stay hydrated in the heat.

Flavored Waters

Because many flavored waters contain sugar, their calories can quickly add up, says Downer. The "no calorie" waters replace sugar with artificial sweeteners, whose health effects are still unknown. Considering the fact that a 12-ounce can of Pepsi contains 150 calories, however, designer waters are healthier than sodas and sugary drinks. **Real Tips:** Propel Fitness water contains only 10 calories and 2 grams of sugar per 8-ounce serving. A healthier option? Dunk a slice of lemon, lime, orange or other fruit in plain water.

Sports Drinks

Designed specifically for athletes, sports beverages, like Gatorade and Powerade, are loaded with electrolytes and nutrients to hydrate and energize sweating bodies. The catch? They're marketed to everyone else—and most of us don't need the extra calories, sugar or salt. Best to save the sports drinks for when you're exercising (or working heavy labor); other than that, water's better. **Real Tips:** Instead of letting your children chug sports drinks when they finish playing, freeze pure fruit juices into popsicles. Also, quench your thirst with water-filled veggies and summer fruits like watermelons, berries and cantaloupes.

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