

HEALTHY DRINKS. HEALTHY KIDS.

Healthy Beverage Consumption in Early Childhood

Recommendations from Key National Health
and Nutrition Organizations



Healthy Drinks, Healthy Kids

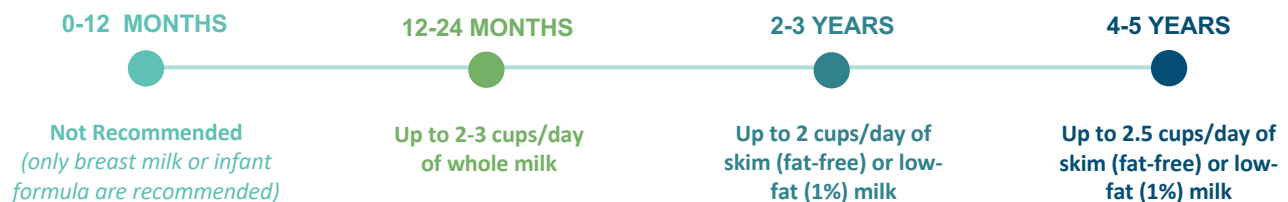
Research shows that what children drink – from birth through age 5 – can have a big impact on their health. That’s why some of the nation’s leading experts on health and nutrition developed recommendations to help parents and caregivers choose what’s best for kids. The full recommendations can be found at HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org. This brief provides more details about *milk*.

All about milk

Milk is an important source of many nutrients that young children need for growth and development like protein, calcium, vitamins A, D, and B12, potassium, phosphorus, riboflavin, and niacin. It is part of the dairy group, which also includes yogurt and cheese.

Drinking pasteurized milk reduces the risk of food poisoning. Pasteurization is the process of heating milk up and then quickly cooling it down to kill any disease-causing germs that may be in raw milk.

So, how much milk do kids need?



When and how should I serve milk?

Serve milk from a cup, and only during meals or snacks. If your child carries around a sippy or covered cup during other times of the day, water is the best drink to have in it. That’s because drinks that have sugars, whether natural (like the ones in milk) or added (like the ones in sodas), can increase the risk of cavities when they are in frequent contact with teeth between meals and snacks.

What if my child is lactose intolerant or allergic to milk, or if our family doesn’t consume dairy products?

Because dairy milk is a key source of many essential nutrients that young, growing bodies need, it’s important to get those nutrients from other foods and beverages if you’re avoiding dairy milk. A pediatrician or a registered dietitian nutritionist can help make sure there aren’t any gaps in your child’s diet. You can learn more about unsweetened plant-based, non-dairy alternative milks at HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org.

Why isn’t cow’s milk okay before 12 months?

It’s best to wait until after your child’s first birthday to introduce cow’s milk because it is not well-suited to meet your infant’s nutritional needs. Serving cow’s milk before your child is 12 months old could put him or her at risk for intestinal bleeding. It also has too many proteins and minerals for your baby’s kidneys to handle.

Thirsty for more? Visit HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org

What about other kinds of milk?

Flavored Milk (i.e. chocolate or strawberry)

People are born with a preference for sweet tastes, and the early years are an important time for forming life-long flavor and food preferences. For babies and toddlers, whose taste preferences are still developing, there is no need to introduce flavored milk, which has added sugars and doesn't have any nutritional benefit over plain milk. Young children are more likely to learn to like a range of flavors and textures if introduced to healthy foods early, and this is a chance to create a healthy habit from the start.

Kids under the age of two should avoid added sugars. Current data show that two- to five-year-olds take in more added sugars than is recommended. If your kids are already hooked on flavored milk, check out the pro-tips for help transitioning them to plain milk.

Organic or Growth Hormone-free Milk

Growth hormones increase milk production in cows, and have not been shown to have a negative effect on human health. Several health and food safety organizations and regulatory agencies have confirmed that milk from cows given growth hormones is safe for people to drink. However, if your personal preference is to avoid them, there are milk options on the market from cows that are not given growth hormones.

Pro-tips: Helping little ones like plain milk

- Starting with plain milk helps kids develop healthy habits from the beginning by shaping their taste preferences so they enjoy its taste. Start with a few small sips at meal times to help build consistency and a routine; soon your little one will expect plain milk with meals.
- If you've already offered flavored milk, that's okay. Try cutting back slowly by mixing a small amount of plain milk with flavored milk, then gradually increase the amount of plain milk while decreasing the amount of flavored milk as your child gets used to less sugar.
- Taste buds can change, it just takes some time – keep it up! After cutting back on sugars in foods and drinks, many people find that the foods and drinks they used to like are now too sweet.

Thirsty for more?

Visit HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org to find more information on other drinks such as:

- Water
- Juice
- Plant-Based, Non-Dairy Milk
- Toddler Milk
- Sugar-Sweetened Beverages
- Low-Calorie Sweetened Beverages

Healthy
Eating
Research

These recommendations were developed by experts at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), and the American Heart Association (AHA) under the leadership of Healthy Eating Research (HER) with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.