

Milk for Toddlers and Preschoolers



Milk can be a source of energy and nutrients, including protein, fat, vitamin A, and vitamin B12 as well as calcium and vitamin D, which are needed for the development of bones and teeth.

Milk Options For Young Children

Breastmilk* – In addition to nutrition, there are the immunological benefits that help your child to get sick less often.

Animal milk – Cow's or goat's milk that is pasteurized and fortified with vitamins A and D.

Plant-based beverages – It is important to be careful if selecting plant-based beverages for young children to ensure they meet your child's nutritional needs.

Infant formula – Formula is rarely needed past 12 months of age, unless recommended by a health care professional for medical reasons.

Toddler milk, “growing up” drinks and pediatric supplements – They are rarely needed. If offered, they count towards your child's total daily milk amount.

Breastmilk

Breastmilk can be a child's milk source for the first 24 months or longer without the need for other milk sources.

Offer a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 international units (IU) if your breastfed child is less than 24 months of age.

Animal Milk and Milk Products

If your child does not drink milk but eats milk products like yogurt and cheese, they may not get enough vitamin D. Talk to your child's health care professional to see if they need a vitamin D supplement.

Children less than 24 months of age

Choose unsweetened milk with 3.25% milk fat (M.F.).

Children 24 months of age and older

Choose unsweetened low-fat milk (skim, 1% or 2% M.F.).

- At least 23% Daily Value (DV) of calcium (300 mg)
- At least 10% DV of vitamin D (80 IU or 2 mcg)

Less than 15% DV of sugar (<15 g) Choose unsweetened low-fat milk (skim, 1% or 2% M.F.).

Plant-Based Beverages

Fortified plant-based beverages can be made from legumes (soy, pea), nuts (almond, cashew, coconut, macadamia), seeds (flax, hemp) or grains (oat, rice). These can be low in protein, so it's important to read the nutrition facts on the packaging.

Children less than 24 months of age

There are few plant-based beverages that offer a similar nutrient profile to unsweetened cow's milk with 3.25% M.F. Soy-based infant formula is an option for this age.

Careful selection is needed when choosing an option for children this age. Talk to your child's health care professional or a registered dietitian to make sure they meet their protein, fat and other nutritional needs.

Children 24 months of age and older

Unsweetened, fortified soy beverage is an option as it has a similar nutrient profile to low-fat (2% M.F.) milk.

If other plant-based beverages are offered, choose unsweetened ones that are labelled as “fortified” or “enriched” and provide the following per one cup (8 ounces or 250 mL):

- At least 6 g of protein
- At least 23% Daily Value (DV) of calcium (300 mg)
- At least 10% DV of vitamin D (80 IU or 2 mcg)
- Less than 15% DV of sugar (<15 g)

*The terms breastmilk/breastfed/breastfeeding are widely used, but human milk/chestfed/chest feeding can be used interchangeably.

How Much Milk is Recommended

Offer 500 mL (16 ounces or 2 cups) of milk daily to provide important nutrients.

Do not offer more than 750 mL (24 ounces or 3 cups) of milk daily. Too much milk can cause:

- Your child to be less interested in eating food, leading to picky eating
- Low iron levels since milk is low in iron and can replace foods with iron
- Constipation, if milk replaces foods with fibre

Animal Milk Safety

Pasteurization

Milk in Canada must be pasteurized, including milk used for cheese and yogurt. Avoid milk that is unpasteurized since it can make your child sick.

Growth hormones

Milk and milk products (like yogurt and cheese) produced in Canada do not have added hormones. However, milk produced in the United States, where the bovine growth hormone is legal to use, can be sold in Canada.

If you want to make sure your milk does not have added hormones, purchase milk produced in Canada by looking for the blue and white Dairy Farmers of Canada label on the container.



Antibiotics

The use of antibiotics in cows is monitored closely in Canada. If a cow becomes sick and antibiotics are given, the milk it produces is discarded until the infection is resolved and all medication has been cleared from it.

Tips On How To Offer Animal Milk Or Plant-Based Beverages

- Set an example and drink milk yourself
- Remember your child does not need more than 500 mL (16 ounces or 2 cups) of milk per day
- Offer several small servings rather than two larger servings. Try 125 mL (4 ounces or ½ cup) at each

meal and one snack per day. If they finish their milk and want more, offer water

- Between meals and snacks, only offer water. If they sip on milk throughout the day, it can fill their small stomach and cause tooth decay
- Offer milk in an open cup, not in a bottle. Spill-free cups and training cups are not the same as an open cup and do not teach your child this important feeding skill. Try picking a special open cup for drinking milk together
- Start the day with breakfast and end the day with a snack instead of with a serving of milk on its own
- If your child's nap or bedtime routine includes a bottle of milk, change the routine. Seat your child at the table for a snack with an open cup of milk. Then brush their teeth and read a book or have a bath as a new routine

Other tips on ways to offer milk

- Calmly offer milk to your child and do not force, beg or bribe them to drink it
- Offer milk as the only beverage option at meals and/or snacks
- Let your child pour their own milk
- Try adding ice cubes or warm the milk
- Chocolate, sweetened or flavoured milk has about three teaspoons of added sugar per 250 mL (8 ounces or 1 cup). If they only drink flavoured milk, mix in regular milk. Over time, transition to unflavoured milk
- Milk powder has the same nutrients as fluid milk. Whole milk powder can be found in bulk stores. It can also be added to recipes. Search online for "recipes with milk powder" for ideas

For more information

Contact **Health811**, 24 hours, 7 days/week to speak to a registered nurse or registered dietitian, at no cost. Call **811** or toll free **1-866-797-0000** or live chat at ontario.ca/health811



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