Healthy Drinks, Healthy Kids

Did you know?

What kids drink can have a big impact on their health.

- Children and youth need plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration and to get nutrients for good health and growth.
- Fruit flavoured drinks, pop, sport drinks, and ice slushes have too much sugar and too few nutrients for healthy growth.
- Large amounts of sugar can cause weight gain, tooth decay, stomachaches, or diarrhea.

How can I tell if my child is drinking enough fluid?

Kids will usually drink when they are thirsty. A child that has dark yellow urine may not be getting enough fluid. Offer water or milk more often.

GO Healthy drinks to Choose Most Often

Parents and teachers can help kids choose healthy drinks by making sure that healthy choices like water and milk are available.

Water

Offer water throughout the day. Try a personal water bottle during active play, sports, studying, and when travelling. Wash water bottles every day in hot, soapy water.

Milk

Every day, offer milk, or soy beverages fortified with calcium and vitamin D, in the amounts your child needs. These drinks help your child get enough protein, calcium, and vitamin D.

Age	Amount and type of milk needed per day
1–2 years	Breastmilk or 2 cups (500 mL) homo (whole) milk
2–8 years	2 cups (500 mL) lower fat milk or fortified soy beverage
9–18 years	At least 2 cups (500 mL) lower fat milk or fortified soy beverage

If your child needs soy formula, follow-up (stage 2) soy formula is recommended for children 1 to 2 years old. Do not give fortified soy beverages until your child is 2 years old.

100% fruit juice

100% fruit juice has vitamins and minerals, but is high in natural sugars. Kids who drink too much juice may not be hungry to eat healthy meals and snacks and may be at a higher risk for weight gain. Kids should eat their fruit rather than drink it! **Limit juice to ½ cup (125 mL) per day**.

- Choose drinks labelled as 100% fruit juice. Products called “drink”, “punch”, “-ade”, “beverage” or “cocktail” have added sugar and little or no fruit juice.
- Use a cup if you give juice. Don’t use a bottle or sippy cup for juice because this can cause cavities.
- Do not give juice to babies under 6 months old.

Drinks to Choose Sometimes

Flavoured milks or flavoured fortified soy beverages

Kids can enjoy flavoured milks and fortified soy beverages, such as chocolate, vanilla, or strawberry up to 3 times per week. They have the same bone building nutrients as regular milk or fortified soy beverage but also provide added sugar.

Drinks to Choose Least Often

These drinks can be very high in sugar, and have little or no nutrients. Examples are regular pop, sport drinks, ice slushes, fruit flavoured drinks, and punches. **Limit "Choose Least Often" drinks to 1 cup (250 mL) a week.**

Pop

Pop is high in sugar and has acids in it that can weaken tooth enamel. Large amounts of pop can also replace healthy drinks such as milk or fortified soy beverages.

Sport drinks

Sport drinks are high in sugar and have added sodium and potassium. Water is the best choice during and after most activities. Sport drinks may be helpful for intense activity that lasts at least one hour with little time for recovery (for example: tournaments and competitions).

Caffeine

Caffeine is found in drinks like cola, iced tea, coffee-based drinks, and energy drinks. Kids may become nervous, irritable, and have problems sleeping if they have caffeine. It can also be addictive.

Energy Drinks

Energy drinks are high in sugar and caffeine. Do not give to kids of any age.

Artificial sweeteners

Drinks with artificial sweeteners have few nutrients and may take the place of healthy foods. They are not recommended for kids unless advised by a healthcare provider.

Vitamin water

Vitamin water is sold as a "healthy choice" but often has added sugar, artificial sweeteners, and herbs. Vitamin water is not recommended for kids.

Don't give children and youth drinks that have caffeine or artificial sweeteners in them.

Drink facts

Some healthy drinks like milk and 100% fruit juice contain natural sugar and are a part of a healthy diet. Other drinks are high in added sugar and should be avoided. The following table lists drinks and average added sugar. Note: 1 tsp table sugar = 4 grams of sugar.

Drink	Serving Size	Average added sugar per serving	Average added sugar per 1 cup (250 mL)
Choose Most Often			
Water	Any amount	0 tsp	0 tsp
1% milk	1 cup (250 mL)	0 tsp	0 tsp
Unsweetened fortified soy beverage	1 cup (250 mL)	0 tsp	0 tsp
100% fruit juice, unsweetened	½ cup (125 mL)	0 tsp	0 tsp
Choose Sometimes			
Flavoured milk	1 cup (250 mL)	4 tsp	4 tsp
Flavoured fortified soy beverage	1 cup (250 mL)	4 tsp	4 tsp
Choose Least Often			
Vitamin water	2⅓ cups (591 mL)	6 tsp	2.5 tsp
Sport drink	1 bottle (710 mL)	10 tsp	4 tsp
Sweetened iced tea	1 can (355 mL)	8 tsp	6 tsp
Iced coffee slush	1⅔ cups (414 mL)	12 tsp	7 tsp
Regular pop	1 can (355 mL)	10 tsp	7 tsp
Fruit flavoured drink	1 bottle (591 mL)	18 tsp	8 tsp
Ice slush	4¾ cups (1.18 L)	36 tsp	8 tsp
Energy drink	1 can (473 mL)	14 tsp	8 tsp

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