

# Plant-based Beverages

Plant-based beverages are made from legumes, nuts, seeds, and grains. This includes:

- almond
- cashew
- coconut
- flax seed
- hemp seed
- macadamia
- oat
- pea
- rice
- soy

You may choose to drink plant-based beverages because of:

- a lactose intolerance
- allergies
- culture
- taste
- vegetarian or vegan diets

Read the ingredient list, like the one below. Look to see if **vitamins and minerals** have been added to the beverage. This means it has been fortified to help meet vitamin and mineral needs. Shake the container before drinking to mix ingredients.

**Sample ingredient list:** soy base (filtered water, soybean) **vitamin and mineral blend** (calcium carbonate, zinc gluconate, vitamin A palmitate, vitamin D2, riboflavin (B2), vitamin b12) gellan gum, sea salt, natural flavour, sodium

## Guide to choosing a plant-based beverage

Select one that:

is unsweetened or has **less than 15% Daily Value or less than 15 g sugar** per 1 cup (250 mL)

has **at least 6 g protein** per 1 cup (250 mL)

has **at least 23% Daily Value** of calcium per 1 cup (250 mL)

has **at least 10% daily value** of vitamin D per 1 cup (250 mL)

### Nutrition Facts

Per 1 cup (250 mL)

| <b>Calories 90</b>      | <b>% Daily Value*</b> |
|-------------------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Fat 4.5 g</b>        | 6 %                   |
| Saturated 0.5 g         | 3 %                   |
| +Trans 0 g              |                       |
| <b>Carbohydrate 4 g</b> |                       |
| Fibre 2 g               | 7 %                   |
| Sugars 1 g              | 1 %                   |
| <b>Protein 8 g</b>      |                       |
| <b>Cholesterol 0 mg</b> |                       |
| <b>Sodium 90 mg</b>     | 4 %                   |
| Potassium 350 mg        | 7 %                   |
| Calcium 300 mg          | 23 %                  |
| Iron 1 mg               | 6 %                   |
| <b>Vitamin D 2 ug</b>   | 10 %                  |

\*5% or less is **a little**, 15% or more is **a lot**

Take a vitamin D supplement daily, no matter what milk or plant-based beverage you choose:

- 0–50 years: 400 IU vitamin D
- 51 years and older: 800–1000 IU vitamin D

## Children under age 2

Plant-based beverages are not a replacement for breast milk or infant formula. They do not have the same nutrition.

### Feed your infant breastmilk or formula.

Plant-based beverages don't contain enough fat, calories, or nutrients to help your child's brain and body grow and develop.

At 9–12 months of age, infants can start to drink 3.25% homogenized cow's milk. If you are not offering cow's milk, continue to **provide breastmilk or soy formula until 2 years of age**. Do not offer plant-based beverages as the main milk to drink.

If your baby is on soy formula, offer it until age 2. Speak to a doctor or dietitian about calcium supplements.

Note: If your family uses plant-based beverages as an ingredient in cooking and baking, it is okay to offer these foods to children once they have started on solids.

## Children 2 and over

After age 2, your child's growth will slow down, but their nutrition needs for protein, calcium, and vitamin D are still important during this time.

A practical way to meet these needs is to offer your child 2 cups (500 mL) of an unsweetened fortified plant-based beverage daily.

## Adults and older adults

Choosing a plant-based beverage with enough protein is important as we age. Protein helps to build and maintain muscle, heal wounds, and keep your immune system healthy.

Some adults on special diets, like low potassium or those for kidney disease may need to discuss using fortified plant-based beverages with their dietitian.

## Pregnancy

If you choose a plant-based beverage, follow these tips:

- Drink 2 cups (500 mL) of a fortified plant-based beverage every day.
- Take a daily multivitamin that contains iron, iodine, folic acid, and at least 400 IU vitamin D.
- Consume choline-rich foods daily, such as soy, fish, or eggs.

## Vegan diets

If you follow a vegan diet or do not eat animal products (meat, fish, eggs, dairy) you may have a harder time meeting your nutrient needs. Some of these key nutrients include protein, calcium, iron, vitamin D, zinc, omega-3 fats, and vitamin B12.

Plant-based yogurts and cheese do not always contain calcium and vitamin D. Read labels to know what nutrients you're getting.

Speak with a dietitian to learn more.

## For more information

If you are choosing a plant-based beverage that doesn't meet the suggested **guide on page one**, or if you have questions or concerns about the type of milk or plant-based beverage to choose, discuss this with your dietitian or healthcare team.

## For more support



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a self-referral form on [ahs.ca/811](https://ahs.ca/811).
- Visit [ahs.ca/nutrition](https://ahs.ca/nutrition).