

Kids and Thirst

For toddlers and pre-schoolers

Water and milk...

The best drinks for children

Milk has calcium and Vitamin D which are needed for strong healthy bones.

- Offer milk in an open cup at mealtime.
- Do not offer milk in a bottle, sippy cup, or when your child is laying down in bed.
- Offer water between meals and snacks, and when your child says, "I'm thirsty".
- Be a good role model and drink water. Your kids learn by watching you.



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How much milk does your child need in a day?

1 to 2 year olds

- Breast milk 3 to 4 times a day and a Vitamin D supplement, **or**
- 500mL (2 cups) of 3.25% MF (Milk Fat) cow's milk, **or**
- 500mL (2 cups) Soy Follow-up Formula (specific for children this age)

2 to 6 year olds

- 500mL (2 cups) of:
 - 2% MF cow's milk, **or**
 - 1% MF cow's milk, **or**
 - skim cow's milk, **or**
 - unsweetened fortified soy beverage

Did you know?

Too much milk is not good for your child. If your child drinks more than 750mL (3cup) of milk every day, they might get too full to eat iron rich foods.

Why is iron important for my child?

Iron is important for your child's brain to develop normally. Children who don't get enough iron may grow and develop more slowly.

- Offer your child 2 to 3 servings of iron rich foods every day.

Examples:

beef	chicken	turkey
pork	fish	beans
lentils	chickpeas	tofu
eggs	seed butters	peanuts
tree nuts	infant fortified cereal	

- To help absorb the iron, offer vegetables and fruit along with iron rich foods.

Examples:

oranges	peppers	broccoli
tomatoes	kiwi	kale
berries		

At around 9-12 months of age, if your child is eating iron rich foods at every meal, you can switch from formula to whole cow's milk in a cup or continue to breastfeed.

Kids and Thirst: For toddlers and pre-schoolers - *continued*

What if my child does not drink milk?

Your child can still meet their nutrient needs by eating other foods. To find out how, call 8-1-1 to talk to a registered dietitian. The dietitian can help you make sure your child is getting enough protein, iron, calcium and vitamin D.

What about plant based beverages?

Unsweetened fortified soy beverages can be a healthy alternative to cow's milk. However, rice, almond, cashew, hemp, oat and coconut beverages are not suitable alternatives to cow's milk for children. Most of these beverages are low in protein and other important nutrients.

What other drinks should I not give my child?

Do not give your child sugary or caffeinated drinks.

Examples:

juice	
flavoured milk	Kool-Aid
pop	diet drinks
tea/ coffee	bubble tea
sports drinks	fruit drinks
vitamin water	energy drinks

These drinks could affect your child's health. Tea also interferes with your child's ability to absorb iron from foods.

Kids do not need juice

Juice has as much sugar as pop. Offer your child fruits instead of juice. Fruit adds fibre to their diet and has much less sugar than juice.



Juice, even 100% fruit or diluted, is not recommended. Children who drink juice regularly might drink too much sugar, eat less nutritious food and be more likely to get cavities.

The best choice is offer plain water throughout the day and milk or unsweetened fortified soy beverages at meal time.

Tips for your child to drink more water

- Let your child pick a special cup or water bottle
- Keep a water bottle in the fridge or on the table for easy access
- Bring a reusable water bottle when you are out
- Serve water cold
- Add sliced cucumbers or mint to water
- Use a fun reusable straw
- Serve fruit infused water instead of juice for special occasions

For questions about your child's nutrition, call 8-1-1 to speak to a registered dietitian at [HealthLinkBC](#).

Online:

Go to [fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/pregnancy-and-baby/life-with-your-toddler-6-24-months/healthy-eating-for-toddlers/healthy-eating-habits-for-toddlers](https://www.fraserhealth.ca/health-topics-a-to-z/pregnancy-and-baby/life-with-your-toddler-6-24-months/healthy-eating-for-toddlers/healthy-eating-habits-for-toddlers)



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