



GOOD Bite

for childcare staff

Is there a problem letting young children drink too much milk?

The answer is YES and here's why:

While breast milk or formula can be used as sole foods for children to around six months of age, children over this age cannot grow and develop properly on milk alone. By this time baby's iron stores are becoming depleted, so it is time to start introducing food that contains iron. Milk (whether it be breast milk or formula and especially ordinary cow's milk) are inadequate sources of iron for older children.

By 6 months of age, it is time to start introducing small amounts of iron rich foods such as red meat or iron enriched baby cereal. These foods could be given before, during or after the milk feed (whatever works best).

Babies or toddlers who have constant access to either breast milk or formula may not be interested in solid foods and frequent sipping of milk from a bottle or frequent suckling of breast milk, can be conducive to tooth decay.

It is important to teach baby to drink from a cup. This will take time and patience. If baby is to be drinking from a cup by 12 months of age, starting the process at about 6 months of age is a good idea.

Toddlers drinking milk from a bottle may result in large amounts being consumed. This can 'ruin' their appetite and result in a reluctance to eat solid foods. The solid foods at this age are important as they provide other nutrients that are not found in milk.

A balanced diet can be a problem if children arrive in child care with a number of bottles of milk. This could mean the food provided (by the centre) or in their lunch box is not being eaten. Children are more likely to become fussy eaters if they know they can have an 'easy to consume' bottle of milk, rather than trying some new food (especially if that food requires chewing).

Recommended dairy food serves for different ages of children in ECECs

	7 to 12 months	13 mths - 23 mths	2-3 yrs	4-8 yrs
Boys	600ml breast milk or formula and ½	1½ serve	1½ serve	2 serve
Girls	600ml breast milk or formula and ½	1½ serve	1½ serve	1½ serve

A standard serve of dairy is:

- 1 cup (250ml) fresh, UHT long life, reconstituted powdered milk
- ½ cup (120ml) evaporated milk
- 2 slices (40g) or 4 x 3 x 2cm cube (40g) of hard cheese, such as cheddar ½ cup
- (120g) ricotta cheese
- ¾ cup (200g) yoghurt
- 1 cup (250ml) soy, rice or other cereal drink with at least 100mg of added calcium per 100ml





Appropriate drinks for babies and young children

Drink Type	Birth - 6 months	6 - 12 months	1 - 3 years	3 - 5 years
Breast milk	Exclusively breastfed	Breast milk + solids	Continue as long as mother & baby wish	Continue as long as mother & baby wish
Infant formula	Only if not breastfeeding	Only if not breastfeeding	Not necessary if tolerating cow's milk	Not necessary
Toddler Milks	Not suitable	Not suitable	Not necessary if tolerating cow's or fortified soy milk	Not necessary
Cow's milk (full-cream & reduced fat)	Not suitable	Not suitable as a drink. Small amounts of full cream can be added to cooking from 6 months	Cow's milk as a drink. Reduced fat for children over 2. More than 2 serves (500ml) daily is not recommended	Reduced fat cow's milk as a drink
Soy milk (enriched with calcium)	Not suitable	Not suitable	May be used in the case of cow's milk allergy or intolerance	May be used in the case of cow's milk allergy or intolerance
Oat, rice, quinoa, almond or coconut milk	Not suitable	Not suitable	Not suitable as a replacement for cow's milk (unless medically advised)	Not suitable as a replacement for cow's milk (unless medically advised)
Water	Not necessary if breastfed. Offer extra feeds in hot weather	Cool boiled water. Encourage use of a cup rather than a bottle	Prompt children to drink water regularly	Prompt children to drink water regularly
Fruit juice	Not suitable	Not suitable	Not necessary. If providing, offer once per day only and dilute 1:1 with water	Not necessary. If providing, offer once per day only and dilute 1:1 with water
Cordial, soft drink, fruit juice drink, flavoured mineral water, sports drink	Not suitable	Not suitable	Not suitable	Not suitable

What About Toddler Milks And Flavoured Milk?

Toddler milk: is promoted to parents who are worried children aren't eating well. Although infant formula cannot be advertised on television, there is no such rule when it comes to toddler milks. Hence it is a back door way for these companies to be able to promote their brands on TV.

The trouble with toddler milks, besides being generally unnecessary, is that they can 'fill up' the fussy eater, making them even less likely to want to eat regular foods. If you look at the ingredients in toddler milk, it is basically milk powder with some added vitamins and minerals.

Flavoured milk: Plain milk is best however, if a child won't drink plain milk, flavoured milk is OK. Plain milk contains lactose (milk sugar). Flavoured milk contains this lactose along with some added sugar (sucrose). Interestingly, the total sugar content of flavoured milk is similar to many fruits and less than flavoured yoghurt (see table).

For centres where food is brought from home one of the lunch box 'shortfalls' is not enough dairy food. We know that lunch box size tetra packs of flavoured milk are more readily available than small tetra packs of plain milk. Flavoured milks are still a good choice. Just like plain milk, flavoured milk provides protein, calcium, zinc etc. it just contains a little more sugar.

Food	Sugar content (g) per 100 ml/grams
Cow's milk	4.1
Flavoured milk	8.2-9.2
Plain Yoghurt	4.8
Flavoured Yoghurt	11.6-13.4
Grapes (Thomson's)	15.5
Kiwifruit	9.1
Banana	16.9



Contact Us!

This fact sheet is produced by the Central Coast Public Health/Community Nutrition Team. If you have any suggestions or nutrition topics you would like covered please contact us by telephone on 4320 3691 or fax on 4320 2828.