

# Fruit Juice and Children: What's Fact? What's Fable?

The American Academy of Pediatrics recently released some new recommendations to help parents decide when and how much fruit juice to serve to their children. This newsletter summarizes those guidelines.

If you are like most parents, you think of fruit juice as a healthy part of your family's diet. Americans consume a lot of fruit juice. In fact, we spend billions of dollars each year on juice products, and children are the largest single group of consumers. Doctors have long recommended fruit juice as a source of vitamin C and an extra source of water for infants and young children. It is advertised as a healthy, natural source of vitamins and, in some cases, calcium. However, parents should be aware that there could be negative effects related to consuming too much fruit juice.

## Learning From the Label

- ◀ By law, to be labeled as “fruit juice”, the product must contain 100% fruit juice.
- ◀ If it contains anything less, the beverage must be described with a term such as “drink”, “beverage”, or “cocktail”.
- ◀ Such drinks may contain between 10% and 99% juice, as well as added sweeteners, flavors, and vitamins- all of which must also be listed on the label.



## Juice: What's In It, What's Not?

Fruit juice is mainly water. It is a carbohydrate food, containing simple sugars, such as fructose and glucose. Juice contains a small amount of protein and minerals and may contain high amounts of potassium, vitamin A and vitamin C. The vitamin C and flavonoids in juice may have positive long-term health effects, such as reducing cancer risk and heart disease. Some juices can also help increase iron absorption. Fluoride may be present in juice, but this depends on factors like the fluoride content of the water used to make juice from concentrate.



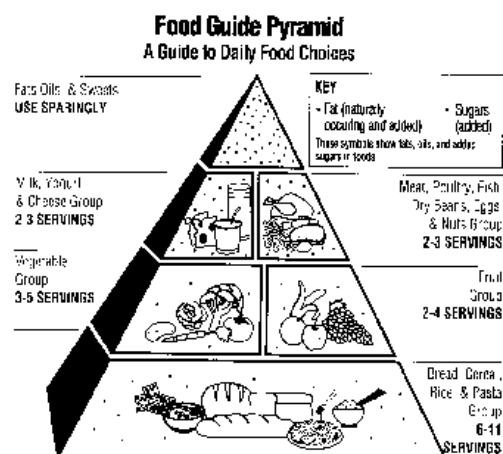
Juice contains no fat or cholesterol, and unless pulp is included, it contains no fiber. Juices fortified with calcium have about the same calcium content as milk but lack other nutrients present in milk.

## Juice in the Food Guide Pyramid

▶ A 6-ounce glass of juice equals 1 fruit serving, but fruit juice offers no nutritional advantage over whole fruit. Fruit juice also lacks the fiber that is found in whole fruit.

▶ Children 1 to 4 years old should have 2 fruit servings and older children should consume up to 4 fruit servings per day. Half of these servings can be in the form of fruit juice (not fruit drinks).

▶ Serving children fruit juice does not promote the positive types of eating behaviors associated with consuming whole fruits.



## Infants

Up to age 6 months, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that breast milk or prepared infant formula be used as a complete source of nutrition. Feeding juice to infants younger than 6 months introduces risks into the diet. Malnutrition and short stature have been associated with consuming too much juice in infancy.



After infants begin to drink from a cup (about 6 months of age), juice may be introduced into the diet. Juice should be offered to infants in a cup, not a bottle, and infants should not be put to bed with a bottle (of any liquid) in their mouth. The sugars in juice are a major contributor to dental decay. An infant should not be allowed to sip juice throughout the day. Four to six ounces are more than adequate and older infants can be encouraged to consume mashed or pureed whole fruits.

## Toddlers and Young Children

It is easy for fruit juice and fruit drinks to be over consumed by toddlers and young children because they taste good. They are attractively and conveniently packaged, and because parents think of them as nutritious, they don't always limit their children's juice consumption. However, with juice, too much of a good thing can turn into a bad thing, causing diarrhea, over nutrition or under nutrition, and tooth decay.



## Older Children and Adolescents

Juice intake should be limited to two 6-ounce servings, or half of the recommended fruit servings each day, for older children and adolescents. The consumption of whole fruit for the benefit of fiber intake should be encouraged. Too much energy intake from juice may contribute to the development of obesity in children of this age group.

### Juice Points to Ponder

- ☞ Fruit juice offers no nutritional benefit for infants younger than 6 months and may in fact introduce health risks into the diet.
- ☞ Fruit juice can be a healthy part of an older child's diet. If consumed in the appropriate amounts for their age, children are not likely to have negative results.
- ☞ Only pasteurized juice is safe for infants, children, and adolescents. Unpasteurized juice may contain harmful bacteria, such as E-coli and Salmonella.
- ☞ Buy only 100% fruit juice. Fruit drinks do not offer the same nutritional benefits.
- ☞ Children should be encouraged to eat whole fruits. Fruit juice should account for no more than 2 of the daily-recommended fruit servings.
- ☞ The main risks associated with over consumption of fruit juice in children are dental decay, diarrhea, and intestinal discomfort.
- ☞ Extremely high consumption of fruit juice in children may contribute to the development of obesity. If juice replaces protein, fat, vitamins and minerals in the diet, it may also contribute to malnutrition.

Source: American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement on *The Use and Misuse of Fruit Juice in Pediatrics*, May 2001.

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## **Fruit Juice Milk Shake** (Makes 4 servings)

3 cups ripe fresh fruit in season, or canned fruit in light syrup or natural juice.

1 cup of low fat or skim milk

2 cups water or drained juice from can

8 ice cubes, crushed

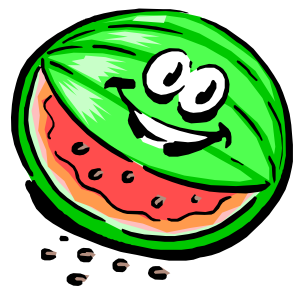
1. Prepare fruit: rinse, slice or peel fresh fruit. Drain juice from canned fruit. Save liquid.
2. Mash fruit using a strainer or a fork
3. Crush ice cubes using a dishtowel or heavy plastic bag and a hammer or rolling pin.
4. Combine fruit, milk, water or juice from canned fruit and stir well. Stir in crushed ice.

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## **Making More out of Marginal Meals!**

Adding fruit to a typical kid's meal like mac n' cheese, peanut butter and jelly, or frozen pizza adds taste and color to the same old same old. When you serve fresh cherries, blueberries, strawberries, kiwi, cantaloupe, orange slices, watermelon or other fruit favorites you also add good nutrition in the form of fiber, vitamins and minerals.



If you are serving juice with the meal, remember to stay within the recommended number of servings for your child's age (One 6-ounce serving per day for children ages 1-4 and two 6-ounce servings for older children). Also, look for 100% fruit juice on the label.