

Beverages for Your Preschooler

The best drinks for preschoolers are milk and water. Whenever possible, discourage your child from drinking soda and other sugary, calorie-dense beverages.

Help Your Preschooler Consume and Enjoy Milk

Milk helps build and maintain strong, dense bones. Include low-fat and fat-free milk for your child every day. Preschoolers need two cups (16 ounces) of milk daily. If you think your preschooler may be lactose intolerant or allergic to milk, check with your child's doctor to be sure.

Children who are two years and older can drink low-fat and fat-free milk. They provide the same amount of calcium and vitamin D as whole milk or 2% milk, but less saturated fat and calories. Foods high in saturated fat tend to raise blood cholesterol levels. Select skim milk or 1% milk.

Some children don't consume enough milk and milk products. Other children may prefer milk to other foods and fill up on it. This leaves less room for other important foods. Help your child get enough but not too much milk.



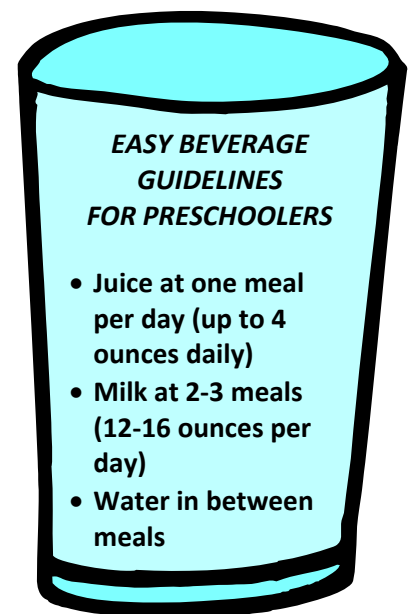
Offer Water Often

When your preschooler is thirsty, water is a good beverage choice. It provides the fluid your child's body needs. Be sure to have water available when your child is playing outdoors or doing other physical activity.

Your preschooler will learn to like the taste of water, if you offer water often. Have a pitcher of water cooled in the refrigerator. For variety, add a slice of lemon, lime, cucumber, or watermelon to water. Drink water yourself as a good role model.

Make sure your preschooler drinks fluoridated water. It helps build and maintain strong teeth. Many community tap water supplies contain fluoride. Check with your water supplier to make sure. If your water supply is not fluoridated or is from a well, check with your doctor about a possible need for fluoride supplements.

Bottled water is convenient, but can get expensive. Fill re-usable water bottles with tap



water. Thoroughly clean refillable water bottles between uses. Water from a public water supply must meet strict safety standards. Most well water is safe, but do an annual water test to be sure. Check with your local extension office to have a water test.

Flavored or vitamin waters may have added sweeteners. Be sure to read the nutrition facts label on these beverages.

Juice or Fruit Drinks?

Because juice is convenient, it is easy to drink too much of it. Here is why drinking too much juice can be a problem:

- Juice has calories. Too many calories may contribute to overweight. Go easy for yourself, too!
- If juice replaces milk or calcium-fortified soy beverages, your child may not get enough bone building calcium.
- Sipping juice a lot promotes cavities. Sometimes diarrhea is a problem too.

Offer your child enough juice, but not too much. When offering juice to your preschooler, make sure it's 100% juice (NOT a fruit flavored drink). Limit juice to 1/2 - 3/4 cup or less per day. If your child wants more to drink, offer low-fat or fat-free milk or water as an alternative beverage.



Don't confuse fruit type drinks with 100% juice. Sweetened beverages such as fruit punch and fruit drinks look like fruit juice, but may contain little or no fruit. These drinks, as well as some flavored waters, sweetened teas, and sports drinks, provide calories, but little or no nutrients.

YES, WATCH THE CALORIES!

- 1970s: 6-8% of our calories came from beverages.
- Today: 21% of our calories come from beverages.

Soda and fruit drinks provide almost half of these calories.

Source: Review of Beverage Panel, American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.

Sugar-Sweetened Beverages

A large proportion of added sugar in the American diet comes from sugar-sweetened beverages. Children age 2 years and older consume 83 more calories of added sugar per day than they did in the 1970s. Of these additional calories, 54 came from carbonated soft drinks and 13 came from sugared fruit drinks. Drinking sweet beverages is associated with the risk of becoming overweight.

References:

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