

Children and Drinks

Dehydration can occur quickly in our children and it can sometimes be difficult to track what our children drink, especially as they get older. For this reason, it is important that we make the best choices possible from an early age. Educating our children about healthy drink options and regular healthy drinking practices including leading by example will give your child the best chance to make healthy choices for themselves as they learn to become independent.

The Australian Dietary Guidelines recommend water and milk being the best and first options for children's drinks.

Water

Water is the giver of life, it is essential to maintaining a healthy body and is integral to most bodily functions. Water is found in organs, muscle cells, digestive juices, sweat, and blood making up about 70% of the human body. Our bodies lose water through perspiration, human waste (urine and faeces), our blood and including the air we breathe. Hence the importance of drinking water regularly to replenish the water we use to maintain a healthy body. Although water contains no energy itself; water maintains the health of every cell in our body through osmosis; water metabolises the fuel our bodies use and eliminates metabolic by-products. Water aids regulating



the body's temperature as well as transporting essential nutrients to all of the body's organs.

Though most foods also contain water this only makes up for about 20% of the recommended daily intake. Drinking water regularly every day is an essential part of staying healthy and hydrated.



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Milk - Rich in Natural Nutrients

Milk: the second-best choice for healthy drink options is considered nutrient rich in relation to the amount of energy (kilojoules) it provides. Milk is recommended by the Australian dietary guidelines as a healthy drink choice for children.

Milk aids our bodies in staying hydrated, as milk is made up of roughly 90% water - however milk's most important ingredients are the vital nutrients it supplies to our body. Milk contains protein, carbohydrates, and fats. Vitamins A, B12 and riboflavin and includes minerals such as calcium, phosphorus, magnesium, potassium, and zinc. Whilst milk contains sugar known as lactose, this is a natural sugar and in small amounts is outweighed by the benefits of calcium, casein, and phosphorus; essential nutrients to developing strong healthy teeth and bones. Milk is a healthy drink option for kids.



Benefits of Drinking Milk

The human body requires a certain amount of nutrients and energy to develop healthy strong bones, our childhood and adolescence being a most important period for this process. It is at these ages where we can grow quite rapidly and where children learn to drink and feed themselves independently. Research shows children that

exercise regularly and consume calcium rich foods have healthier nutrient intakes and stronger bones with fewer fractures. Milk being an excellent source of calcium will ensure bones can grow to their full potential of peak bone mass (maximum bone density).



Flavoured Milk

Though flavoured milk contains added sugars it is usually less than other sweetened drinks and still contains the 10 essential nutrients regular milk does. So, when milk and water is getting boring flavoured milks are fine to use in moderation and if healthy oral hygiene practices are maintained.



Fruit Juices

Fruit juice in small amounts is okay especially if good oral hygiene practices are maintained. Fruit juices do contain some vitamins and antioxidants; however, these same nutrients can be acquired by eating fruit which is recommended over drinking fruit juices. Though you can buy fruit juice without added sugars most fruit juices marketed at children contain added sugars and preservatives and often these levels are comparable to soft drinks. Fruit juices should be consumed in moderation and encouraged to eat fruit instead as the body will also benefit from the natural dietary fibres that are removed through the juicing process.

Sweetened Drinks

Whilst sweetened drinks like cordials, soft drinks, and fruit juices contain energy (kilojoules) in the form of added sugars, they supply very little nutrients to the body. Consuming too many of these sugary drinks can unbalance a healthy diet, increasing the risks of tooth decay and other health concerns. If these drinks are replacing regular daily recommended liquids such as water and milk, the body can quickly become dehydrated and malnourished.



Choosing the Healthiest Options

Our children's overall health, diet, and lifestyle should be considered when choosing the right drinks and foods. How active are they? Are they eating enough nutrient rich foods to ensure they grow strong and healthy? Staying hydrated should always be the first concern when selecting a drink for our children, water should always be the go-to drink of choice, though nutritional values should also be considered. Milk is very important to our children's bone growth and should always be the second-best option before choosing sweetened drinks.

[The Australian Dietary guide-lines](#) and [Healthy kids association](#) have useful information and resources to help you maintain a healthy balanced diet for your children.



References

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