

HEALTHY DRINKS. HEALTHY KIDS.

Healthy Beverage Consumption in Early Childhood

Recommendations from Key National Health
and Nutrition Organizations



Healthy Drinks, Healthy Kids

Research shows that what children drink – from birth through age 5 – can have a big impact on their health. That’s why some of the nation’s leading experts on health and nutrition developed recommendations to help parents and caregivers choose what’s best for kids. The full recommendations can be found at HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org. This brief provides more details about *toddler milks*.

All about toddler milks

These are milk drinks that are usually made up of powdered milk, corn syrup solids or other added calorie-containing sweeteners, vegetable oil, and added vitamins and minerals. Toddler milks are marketed for kids ages nine to 36 months old as the next step after infant formula.

Toddler milks go by other names, like:

- “transition formulas”
- “follow-on (or follow-up) formulas”
- “weaning formulas”
- “growing-up milks”
- “young child milks”

So, what are the recommendations on toddler milks consumption?



What do I need to know about toddler milks for young kids?

1. Toddler milks don’t offer any nutritional benefit over a healthy, balanced diet
2. Toddler milks are not recommended for toddlers and young kids.
3. Toddler milks are also not recommended as a strategy for addressing picky eating.

Why aren’t these products recommended for young children?

Toddler milks don’t offer any nutritional benefit over a healthy, balanced diet. They are usually made with dairy milk but tend to have more sodium and less protein than whole milk. Plus, they contain added sugars, which kids don’t need and drinking these beverages makes it less likely that younger children will keep up with breastfeeding. To learn more about what experts do recommend at different stages for kids five and under, visit HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org.

Did you know?

- Toddler milk products have been marketed in Europe for many years and have more recently been increasingly marketed in the United States.
- Cup for cup, toddler milks are more expensive than cow’s milk.

How do I make sure my child gets all of the nutrients they need for a balanced, healthy diet?

A healthy, balanced diet is important for young, growing children! By eating healthy foods, like fruits and veggies, whole grains, dairy and lean proteins, as well as drinking water and milk, your child will get all of the nutrients he or she needs for their developing bodies and brains. Milk is an important source of many nutrients that young children need for healthy growth and development like protein, fat, calcium, vitamin D, and potassium. Toddler milks don't add anything extra to the diet that your child isn't already getting from these healthy foods and beverages. For advice on what and how much to eat, [check out our great tips and visuals for feeding kids ages 2-8.](#)

But, what should I do if I have a picky eater and I'm worried they're not eating enough?

Reluctance to eat new foods and other picky eating habits are common during toddlerhood and the preschool years. For most children this is relatively short-lived and tends to get better with age as children enter the school years. Here are a few tips for encouraging your child to try and enjoy new healthy food:

- **The single most effective strategy to get kids to eat healthy food is repeated exposure.** Kids may need to try something 10-15 times before knowing if they like it or not. Try pairing a new food with familiar flavors or providing just a few small bites at each eating occasion.
- **Structure food environments in ways that provide children with abundant opportunities to learn about and have positive experiences with new foods.** Examples include enjoying meals as a family whenever possible and avoiding pressuring kids to finish everything on their plate at mealtimes.
- **Support children's independence in learning to accept healthy foods by giving them options and finding ways for them to participate.** Strategies include letting your child help with age-appropriate food prep and having conversations about new foods and honoring their answers (for example, "Is it thumbs up, thumbs down, or in-between?").

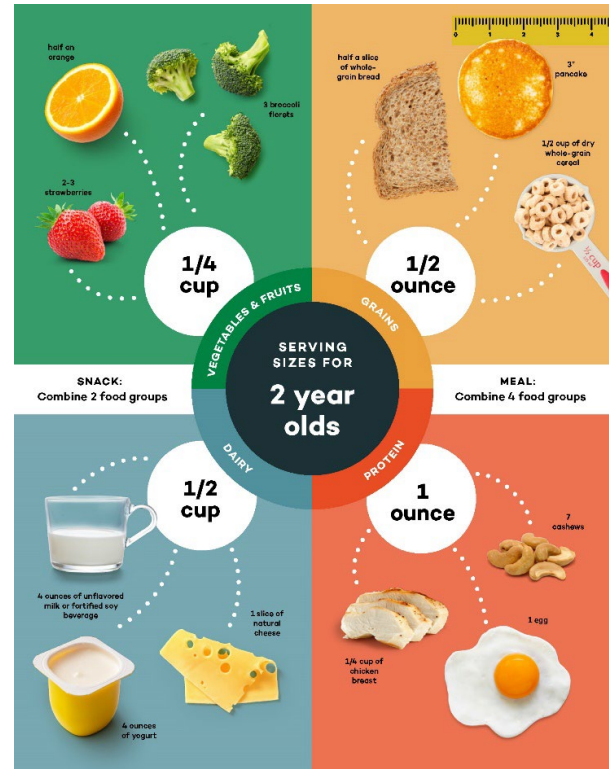
If your child has been diagnosed with Avoidant Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) or you fear your child is not taking in enough calories and nutrients for proper growth and development, **work with your pediatrician or health care team to develop a plan that is right for your child and family.**

For more tips and answers to your young child's feeding and eating challenges: [Visit our Feeding Tips Website](#)

Thirsty for more?

Visit HealthyDrinksHealthyKids.org to find more information on other drinks such as:

- Water
- Milk
- Juice
- Plant-Based, Non-Dairy Milk
- Sugar-Sweetened Beverages
- Low-Calorie Sweetened Beverages



Healthy Eating Research

These recommendations were developed by experts at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD), and the American Heart Association (AHA) under the leadership of Healthy Eating Research (HER) with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.