



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Parenting the
Preschooler



Beverages

What are the best beverages for preschooler children? What are some creative tips for encouraging preschool children to drink healthy beverages?

Beverage Tips in Small Sips

- Chill a pitcher of water in the refrigerator for easy access.
- Offer water between meals when child is thirsty.
- Have water available when playing outdoors.
- Add a slice of cucumber, lime, lemon, watermelon or other fruits to water for variety.
- Fill re-usable water bottles with water for on-the-go convenience.
- Serve beverages in regular cups instead of sippy cups to reduce risk of cavities.
- Provide skim or 1% milk at 2–3 meals (2–2 ½ cups per day of milk or other dairy).
- Model healthy beverage choices for preschoolers.
- Children do not need juice. If you choose to use juice for a fruit or vegetable serving, use only 100% juice, and limit juice to 4–6 ounces/day.

CAUTION: Watch the added sugar!

Soda, energy drinks, sports drinks and fruit-flavored drinks should not be given to preschoolers. The added sugars in these drinks add calories without any other nutrients. Using drinks high in sugar during the preschool years may increase the risk of becoming overweight as the child gets older.



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Why Drink Milk?

Milk helps build and maintain strong, dense bones. Children who are two and older should drink 2–2 ½ cups of low-fat (1%) or skim milk every day, or the equivalent in other dairy products such as yogurt and cheese.

Help preschoolers get enough, but not too much, milk. Some children do not consume enough milk, while others may prefer milk causing them not to eat enough other healthy foods.

If you are concerned about lactose intolerance or milk allergies, check with your child's doctor.

Some families choose not to drink cow's milk. Fortified soy milk is a good alternative. Other milk replacements may not contain the protein, calcium, vitamin D and other nutrients needed; read labels carefully and avoid drinks with added sugars. The protein, calcium and Vitamin D content can vary greatly so read and compare the labels.

Benefits of Water

- Water helps digest food and move nutrients throughout the body.
- Water regulates body temperature and keeps skin hydrated.
- Fluoridated water helps build and maintain strong teeth and bones.

Facts on Other Drinks

Be sure to read the nutrition facts labels on beverages. Some drinks are high in calories and have little or no nutrients.

Energy drinks, sports drinks, flavored waters and other beverages often have added sweeteners, caffeine or herbal ingredients that may not be appropriate for young children. Milk or milk substitutes and water are the best choices for young children. New research also supports limiting juice intake to 4–6 ounces daily. Here is why:

- Juice has calories; too many calories may lead to becoming overweight.
- If juice replaces milk or calcium-fortified soy beverages, your child may not get enough calcium. Juice lacks the fiber of whole fruits and vegetables.
- Sipping excess juice may promote cavities or cause diarrhea.



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