



# Mealtime Mentoring

February 2009

## Beverages

*Children are often thirsty. What beverages should be served?*

### Milks

Milk offers several nutrients that everybody needs.

Calcium and vitamin D – These are important for growing and maintaining healthy bones and teeth.

Protein – This is important for growing a healthy body. It also helps to keep the body in good repair.

Vitamin A – This vitamin keeps eyes and skin healthy.

### Which milk should I choose?

When parents indicate that their child is ready for milk, usually after 1 year of age, provide whole milk. Babies and young toddlers need the fat found in whole milk to grow properly.

Starting at age two, children can be offered lower fat milks such as 2%, 1% or skim.

Fortified soy, rice and other vegetarian beverages are not recommended until the child is 2 years of age and over.

### What is the difference in the milks?

When you look at the Nutrition Facts on a milk container, it will show that there is the same amount of bone-building calcium, vitamin D, vitamin A and protein no matter what type is chosen. The lower fat varieties just have less fat, particularly saturated fat. This makes them healthier for the older child and adult.

### How can I change milks without creating a fuss?

- Switch milks one type at a time. First, switch from whole milk to 2%. When the child is familiar with the 2% flavour and mouth-feel, try a lower fat choice.
- Offer lower fat milks first in smoothies or on cereal or fruit where they may not notice it.

Canada's Food Guide recommends that all people two years of age and over drink 2 cups of fluid milk daily. To help meet this, offer fluid milk to the children in your child care facility at least once a day. Because chocolate milk is sweetened, white milk is preferred.



*Drink milk yourself when you are serving it to the children.  
Your bones will appreciate it!*

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## Water

Water is the best thirst quencher. Offer it first when the child determines he is thirsty. Children may need more water when they are very active in play or in hot weather.

## Juices

Vegetable and fruit juices, like vegetables and fruit themselves, provide nutrients.

Vitamin C – This vitamin helps the body fight infections, heal its bruises and cuts and use iron found in other foods.

Vitamin A – This vitamin keeps eyes and skin healthy.

Carbohydrates – Carbohydrates provide energy.

What juice doesn't provide that vegetables and fruits do is fibre. Fibre helps the digestive system, helps prevent constipation and helps regulate blood sugar and cholesterol levels, among other benefits.

### Are all juices the same?

Only a container label that says fruit "juice" is 100% juice. If a label says "drink", "cocktail", "beverage" or "punch", it may contain more water and sugar than juice. Don't just look at the picture on the label. Choose a variety that says "100% unsweetened fruit juice". Look at the ingredient list to make sure the juice you are purchasing lists the juice as the first ingredient (or second after water if it is from concentrate).

### How much juice should be offered?

If juice is offered, serve unsweetened 100% juice and limit it to 3 times a week.

### Why limit serving juice?

- Juice is convenient and it is very easy for a child to drink too much. Juice is a concentrated source of calories. Drinking too much may contribute to overeating. (Did you know that 1 cup of apple juice is equivalent in calories to eating 3 apples?)
- Sipping on juice throughout the day may promote cavities. Serve juice in a cup with a meal or snack.
- Too much juice may contribute to chronic diarrhea and stomach aches.
- If children drink too much juice, they may not drink enough milk to get all the calcium they need.



*Canada's Food Guide recommends eating vegetables and fruits more often than drinking juice.*

*Helping you provide healthy food and a positive eating environment in early learning and child care settings.*