

# HEALTHY BEGINNINGS

## MILK FOR TODDLERS AND PRESCHOOLERS

Milk provides your child with energy and important nutrients like protein, vitamin A, vitamin B<sub>12</sub> as well as calcium and vitamin D which are nutrients needed to grow healthy bones and teeth.

### MILK RECOMMENDATIONS

You can introduce full-fat cow's (or goat's) milk as early as nine months of age if a variety of food is eaten daily, including iron-rich foods like beef, chicken, fish, beans, lentils, tofu, eggs and iron-fortified cereals. If your baby gets breastmilk, there is no need to introduce milk at this time.

Offer 500 mL (16 ounces or 2 cups) of milk daily to provide important nutrients without increasing the risk of low iron levels.

Do not offer more than 750 mL (24 ounces or 3 cups) of milk daily. Too much milk can cause:

- Your child to be less interested in eating food, leading to picky eating
- Low iron levels since milk is low in iron and can replace foods with iron
- Constipation, if milk replaces foods with fibre

### Children less than 24 months of age

Choose unflavoured milk with 3.25% milk fat (M.F.).

### Children 24 months and older

Choose unflavoured low-fat milk (skim, 1% or 2% M.F.).

### NON-DAIRY MILK OPTIONS

For children 24 months of age and older, full-fat, unflavoured or unsweetened, fortified soy beverage is an option. The nutrition is similar to low-fat (2% M.F.) milk and works well for families wanting a non-dairy option.

Do not offer beverages like fortified almond, coconut, hemp or rice "milk". They have little protein and are often low in calories.

While fortified pea "milk" has protein, it does not have vitamin D added in Canada.

### DOES MY CHILD EVEN NEED MILK?

If your child gets breastmilk several times a day, they may be meeting their milk needs and do not need any extra milk sources.

For breastfed children less than 24 months of age, offer a daily vitamin D supplement of 400 International Units (IU).

If your child gets infant formula, switch to milk by 12 months of age since it is rare for a child to need infant formula beyond a year.

If your child does not drink milk but eats milk products like yogurt and cheese, they may get enough calcium and protein, but not enough vitamin D. Talk to your child's health care provider about whether or not they need a vitamin D supplement.

### PUBLIC HEALTH

1-800-361-5653  
TTY 1-866-512-6228  
[york.ca/feedingkids](http://york.ca/feedingkids)



York Region

## MILK SAFETY

### Pasteurization

Milk in Canada must be pasteurized, including milk used for cheese and yogurt. Avoid milk that is unpasteurized since it can make your child sick.

### Growth hormones

Milk and milk products (like yogurt and cheese) produced in Canada do not have added hormones. However, milk produced in America where the bovine growth hormone is legal to use, can be sold in Canada.



If you want to make sure your milk does not have added hormones, look for the blue and white Dairy Farmers of Canada label on the container.

### Antibiotics

The use of antibiotics is monitored closely. If a cow becomes sick and antibiotics are needed, the milk produced is discarded for a withdrawal period, while the antibiotics are being cleared.

## TIPS ON HOW TO OFFER MILK

- Set an example and drink milk yourself.
- Remember your child does not need more than 500 mL (16 ounces or 2 cups) of milk per day.
- Offer several small servings rather than two larger servings. Try 125 mL (4 ounces or ½ cup) at each meal and one snack per day.
- Between meals and snacks, only offer water. If they sip on milk throughout the day, it can fill their small stomach and cause tooth decay.
- It's OK to say "no" and have consistent expectations. If they finish their milk and want more, offer water only.
- Only offer milk in an open cup; not in a bottle. Spill-proof cups, cups with a straw and sippy cups are not the same as an open cup and do

not teach your child this important feeding skill. Try picking a special open cup for drinking milk.

- Start the day with breakfast and end the day with a snack instead of starting or ending the day with a serving of milk on its own.
- If your child's nap or bedtime routine includes a bottle of milk, change the routine. Seat your child at the table for a snack with an open cup of milk. Then brush their teeth and read a book or have a bath as a new nap or bedtime routine.

### Tips if your child doesn't like to drink milk

- Calmly offer milk to your child. Do not force, beg or bribe your child to drink milk.
- Make milk the only beverage option at meals and/or snacks.
- Let your child pour their own milk.
- Try adding ice cubes or warm the milk.
- Chocolate, sweetened or flavoured milk has about three teaspoons of added sugar per 250 mL (8 ounces or 1 cup). If they only drink flavoured milk, mix in regular milk. Over time, transition to unflavoured milk.
- Specialty pediatric supplements or "toddler milk" are usually not needed. If offered, they count towards your child's total milk amount.
- Milk powder has the same nutrients as fluid milk. Whole milk powder can be found in bulk stores. It can also be added to recipes. Search online for "recipes with milk powder" for ideas.

## WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

For information about breastfeeding, visit [york.ca/breastfeeding](http://york.ca/breastfeeding)

For more information about nutrition, visit [york.ca/feedingkids](http://york.ca/feedingkids) or [unlockfood.ca](http://unlockfood.ca)

To speak to a registered dietitian at no cost, call Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000.

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