

Milk, Flavoured Milk and Other Beverages Made With Milk

Milk and milk alternatives (e.g. unsweetened fortified soy beverage) are the main source of calcium and vitamin D in most Canadian diets. Both calcium and vitamin D help build and maintain strong bones and teeth. Plain milk is also a source of protein, vitamin A, and riboflavin.

Young children (9 months-2 years) are advised to drink homogenized (3.25%MF) plain milk, while after age 2, everyone is encouraged to choose lower-fat options (2%MF or less). Lower-fat plain milk has the same nutrients as higher fat plain milk with less fat.

One cup (250 mL) of plain milk = 1 serving from the Milk and Alternatives food group in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide* and in *Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide - First Nations, Inuit and Métis*. Children aged 4-13 should aim for 2 to 4 Food Guide Servings of Milk and Alternatives each day.

Reduced-Sugar and Flavoured Milk

Adding vanilla, chocolate, strawberry or other flavours to plain milk can add a lot of extra sugar. Some flavoured milks have 20 grams or less sugar per 250 mL. These reduced-sugar flavoured milks are a “sometimes” choice. Regular flavoured milks will contain more added sugars and should be consumed even less often. It is best to offer children plain (not flavoured) milk regularly so they learn to enjoy it. If making flavoured milk at home, add a small amount of syrup or powder. Less is best.

Milkshakes

Milkshakes are made from milk, ice cream or iced milk, often with added flavourings, syrups or sauces. Milkshakes will have a lot more sugar and fat than plain milk. Even without adding any extra syrups, 1 cup of plain ice cream has almost the same amount of sugar as a can of pop.

Store-bought Smoothies

Store-bought smoothies often contain as much sugar as a milkshake. Don't be fooled by the advertising that suggests smoothies are a healthy choice because they contain fruit! Once you see how much added sugar is in many store-bought smoothies, you can understand why smoothies made with whole fruits and plain milk or yogurt are healthier drink choices.

Hot Chocolate and Specialty Drinks

A hot chocolate or specialty coffee drink can have the same amount of sugar as 2 cans of pop. The sugar comes from the chocolate or chocolate mix and the added whipped cream, marshmallows, and chocolate syrup. Skipping the additions, asking for “half sweet” and choosing a smaller serving size can reduce the sugar; however, the sugar can really add up if consumed frequently.

Coffee drinks are not recommended for children. Not only do they often contain high amounts of sugar, but they also contain caffeine. . Kids do not need caffeine!

References

OSNPPH, *Sip Smart!*™ Ontario Teacher Resource Guide, 2016 (adapted with permission)