



Health & Safety Notes

Milk

Young children need good nutrition to grow strong and healthy. Milk has many nutrients and is part of a balanced diet. Milk supplies protein, calcium, vitamins A and D, and fluids that are needed for children's growth and development.

Breast milk

Usually, a child's first food is breast milk. Breastfeeding is healthy for moms and babies. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends exclusive breastfeeding until the baby is six months old, then begin offering complementary foods (table food). Once infants begin to eat table food, they will naturally take less breast milk. AAP recommends breastfeeding until at least 12 months. Breastfeeding can continue after 12 months if baby and mom desire. You can support breastfeeding families in your child care program by adopting breastfeeding friendly policies. Provide a comfortable place for mothers to feed their babies (or pump) and provide training for staff on safely storing, handling, and feeding breast milk.

When infants do not exclusively breastfeed, iron-fortified infant formula can be given as an alternative or in addition to breast milk. Always follow the label instructions for mixing infant formula. Cow's milk, goat's milk, evaporated milk, and other milk alternatives are not recommended during the first 12 months of life. Starting at one year of age, whole cow's milk can be served.

Safety

Milk (including breast milk and prepared formula) spoils if not refrigerated. Keep milk in the refrigerator (set at 41 degrees F or lower) until just before serving. Thaw frozen breast milk in the refrigerator. Do not warm a bottle in a microwave, prop a bottle for a baby, or leave a bottle in a baby's crib. Do not allow young children to carry around a bottle or sippy cup.

Fat content in milk

Cow's milk is available with different amounts of fat. AAP recommends whole milk (4% fat) for toddlers ages one to two years to support their rapid brain development. Low-fat (1% fat) or nonfat (skim, fat-free) is recommended for children ages two years and older.

The Healthy Beverages in Child Care Act (AB 2084) requires licensed child care providers in California to:

- Serve low fat (1%) or skim milk to children two years of age and older.
- Serve only unflavored milk. Flavored milk, such as chocolate milk or strawberry milk is not allowed to be served in licensed child care programs in California.

Sometimes a health care provider will be concerned about a child's weight; a child may be gaining too much or not enough. In either case, a health care provider may suggest whole milk for a child two years of age or older or low fat milk for a child between one and two years of age. Whole milk may be given to children two years of age and older if provided by the parent or as part of a special nutrition care plan signed by the child's health care provider.

Raw milk and pasteurization

The process of heating milk to kill bacteria is called pasteurization. Illnesses caused by certain bacteria can be very serious for infants and young children. Community Care Licensing regulations state that only pasteurized milk can be offered in licensed child care programs in California. Most milk sold in grocery stores is pasteurized. Milk that has not been pasteurized is called raw milk and may not be served in licensed child care programs in California.

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Homogenization

The process of blending milk and milk fats to a smooth consistency is called homogenization. This process does not involve additives or chemical treatments. Most milk sold in grocery stores is homogenized. Raw milk is usually not homogenized.

Antibiotics and hormones

Sometimes cows are given antibiotics to treat infections. United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requirements state milk must be free of antibiotics. Farmers must allow the antibiotics to leave the animal's system before milking and/or discard milk that may have drug residues. Milk is periodically tested by the FDA to check for drug residues.

Some dairy farmers give their cows a synthetic hormone called rBST to increase milk production. Dairy farmers are not required to disclose if rBST is given to their cows. However, many choose not to use rBST and may state this on the product label. According to the FDA, milk from cows injected with rBST is safe for people to drink.

Organic milk

Milk certified as organic by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) must meet strict guidelines. Organic milk may have the same nutritional value as conventional milk, but organic milk comes from cows that haven't been given antibiotics or hormones. In addition, cows that produce organic milk graze in pastures without chemical fertilizers, pesticides, or genetically modified seeds. California is the nation's largest producer of organic milk. While organic practices influence how cows are treated and the environment, more research is needed to know if eating organic food makes people healthier.

Can children drink too much milk?

Yes. Drinking too much milk can lead to problems like iron deficiency anemia and decreased appetite for other nutritious foods. Milk intake should not exceed 16-24 ounces per day for children ages two to five years.

Milk allergy

Milk is one of the most common food allergies in children. Symptoms of milk allergy include wheezing, vomiting, hives, and digestive problems and can range from mild to severe. For some children, milk allergy can cause a severe, life-threatening reaction called anaphylaxis. Children with milk allergy need to avoid milk and milk products. Follow best practices by reading labels on food, posting allergy notices in areas where food is prepared, served, or consumed,

and creating a special nutritional needs care plan a child with an allergy. Fortunately, many children will outgrow their milk allergy.

Lactose intolerance

Some people experience gas and stomach pain when they drink milk because they lack the enzyme (lactase) to digest the sugar (lactose) in milk. Lactose intolerance is most common among African-Americans, Native Americans and Asian-Americans. Most young children, of all races, can digest milk. However, some will lose the enzyme lactase as they get older. A health care provider may prescribe lactase pills or suggest lactose-free cow's milk for children who are lactose intolerant. Children who do not drink cow's milk will need to get calcium, vitamin A and vitamin D from other food sources or supplements.

Alternatives to cow's milk

Soy milk can be substituted for cow's milk when children are lactose intolerant or have milk allergy. Be sure to choose vitamin-fortified soy milk that is nutritionally equivalent to cow's milk. Nutritionally equivalent soy milk has the same amount of protein and vitamins as cow's milk. Pasteurized goat's milk can also be served to children instead of cow's milk and will provide similar nutrition. Some alternative products (for example, almond milk, rice milk, coconut milk, flax milk, and hemp milk) should not be substituted for cow's milk because they do not provide the same nutrition and may have added sugars.

Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) reimbursement

If your program participates in the federally funded CACFP program you can be reimbursed for the cost of milk. The rules for reimbursement follow the AAP recommendations for fat content: only 1% or skim milk may be served to children two years of age and older, and whole milk served to children from one to two years of age. Non-dairy beverages that are nutritionally equivalent to milk may be served to children with special dietary needs.

References & Resources

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), 2013, *Pediatric Nutrition Handbook, 7th Edition*

United States Food and Drug Association (FDA), www.fda.gov

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), <https://www.usda.gov>

Caring for Our Children, National Health and Safety Performance Standards, Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 3rd Edition, <http://cfoc.nrckids.org/>

Nutrition and Feeding Care Plan, California Childcare Health Program (CCHP), <http://cchp.ucsf.edu/sites/cchp.ucsf.edu/files/FeedingNutrCare.pdf>