

Flavored Milk FAQ's

Flavored Milk: It's More Than Flavor!
Flavored milk is packed with nutrients that make it nutritionally superior to soft drinks and fruit drinks. Below are the answers to frequently asked questions about flavored milk that can increase your knowledge on why flavored milk is a nutritious choice, and provide you with information to give to administrators, parents, teachers and students.

What is flavored milk?
Flavored milk is simply white cow's milk, with a little added flavoring and sweetener. It's available in numerous flavors, including chocolate, strawberry, banana, and root beer, from whole to fat-free varieties.

How nutritious is flavored milk?
Flavored milk is a nutrient-rich package providing the same nine essential nutrients as white milk including, calcium, potassium, phosphorus, protein, vitamin D, vitamin A, vitamin B12, riboflavin and niacin (niacin equivalents). Milk's nutrients, especially calcium, are necessary for developing strong bones and teeth. And, milk provides three of the five nutrients that fall short in children's diets, as identified in the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, including calcium, potassium and magnesium.[1] Each 8-ounce serving of milk — plain or flavored — provides 300 mg of calcium, about one-third to one-fourth of the daily calcium requirement for children.

Why choose flavored milk?
Compared to their peers, children who drink flavored milk drink more milk overall and are more likely to meet their calcium needs without consuming more total fat and calories, according to a study in the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*.[2] A nutritious alternative to other beverages, flavored milks are often acceptable to children who might not drink white milk.

How does flavored milk fit into school nutrition programs?
The importance of providing children milk they like, and therefore will drink, was highlighted by a School Milk Pilot Test, which demonstrated that with simple product improvements — including adding additional flavors and plastic packaging — milk sales increased 18% overall at both the elementary and secondary levels and milk consumption increased up to 37%. [3]

Furthermore, a 2004 report on soft drinks in schools from the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends replacing sweetened drinks with real fruit and vegetable juices, water and low-fat white or flavored milk. The report also notes that as sweetened drink consumption rises, milk consumption declines, and that milk is the primary source of calcium in the diets of children and adolescents.[4] Children are more likely to drink flavored milk on a regular basis at school than at home.[5,6]Offering a variety of flavored milks helps ensure children have access to nutritious beverages.

Does flavored milk contain as much added sugar as fruit drinks or carbonated soft drinks?

No. While flavored milk contains both natural and added sugars (nearly half of the sugar in flavored milk is naturally present in the milk), it contains less added sugar than other beverages that kids are drinking such as carbonated soft drinks. On average, an eight-ounce low-fat flavored milk contains around 4 teaspoons of **added** sugar while an equivalent amount of fruit punch contains 6 teaspoons and an equivalent amount of soda contains 7 teaspoons. However, soda in a can is typically consumed as a 12-ounce serving, which provides 9 teaspoons of added sugar. Researchers analyzed food consumption data from the Nutrition Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) and found that flavored milks contributed only 2 percent of total added sugar in children's diets, compared to 50 percent or more added by soft drinks and fruit drinks.[7]

What about the recommendation to decrease added sugars from the Alliance for a Healthier Generation's School Beverage Guidelines?

One group working on wellness initiatives is the Alliance for a Healthier Generation (AGH), a joint initiative of the American Heart Association and the William J. Clinton Foundation. Recently, National Dairy Council® worked with the AHG to amend their original school beverage guideline criteria for flavored milk based on the science behind milk's role in a child's diet.

The original AHG beverage guideline criteria for flavored milk was 150 calories per eight-ounce serving. The amended criteria is 180 calories per eight-ounce serving until August 31, 2008, in recognition of the importance of milk's natural nutrients in children's diets and the limited availability or lack of lower-calorie flavored milks meeting the original guidelines. This timeframe will enable the dairy industry to develop and test new reduced-sugar formulations and support the availability of these products by the 2008-09 school year. Visit www.healthiergeneration.org for complete guidelines.

Does the Institute of Medicine have recommendations for sugar levels in school beverages?

The 2007 National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine report, "*Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools: Leading the Way Toward Healthier Youth*" recommends nutrition standards be established for foods and beverages sold outside of the School Meal Program, such as a la carte cafeteria, vending machine and school store items.[8] The Institute of Medicine is an expert body that advises the government on scientific matters; recommendations in its report do not constitute policy.

For flavored milk, the report recommended no more than 22 grams of sugar per eight-ounce serving, which is equivalent to about 150 calories if made with low-fat milk. As mentioned above regarding the recommendations from the AHG, there is limited availability of flavored milks at this calorie level for schools. National Dairy Council supports the development of reduced-sugar milks to be made available to children and is actively involved in research to optimize added sugars in flavored milk at the level that will provide palatability without being excessive.

To help children consume nutrient-rich milk while balancing added sugar intake, when selecting a low-fat flavored milk, compare grams of added sugar per serving and select the option with the lowest amount of sugar that a child will find palatable.

Will the added calories from sugar contribute to weight gain?
Added sugar, when used in moderation and with concern for overall caloric balance, can increase the appeal of nutrient-rich beverages and provide additional choices for children as part of a healthy diet. Excessive weight gain in children is caused by an imbalance between calories taken in and calories spent on activities, not by any specific food or beverage. Keeping in mind variety and moderation as essential guidelines for choosing foods and beverages, nutrient-rich flavored milk can be part of a balanced diet.

The *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recognize that small amounts of sugar added to nutrient-dense foods, such as reduced-fat milk products, may increase a person's intake of such foods by enhancing palatability of these products, thus improving nutrient intake without contributing excessive calories.[1]

What about the use of sugar substitutes instead of sugar in flavored milk?
NDC supports the development of flavored milk formulations that contain reduced levels of added sugar that will still appeal to children. However, rather than using sugar substitutes, sugar is considered as the first sweetener option for these flavored milk innovations.

Although extensive testing by the FDA has shown five sugar substitutes (saccharine, aspartame, acesulfame-k, neotame, and sucralose [Splenda®] to be safe for adults and children, our research indicates that sugar substitutes have limited acceptability among moms and health professionals. In addition, the 2007 IOM report, *Nutrition Standards for Foods in Schools*, recommends that beverages containing sugar substitutes not be allowed in elementary or middle schools, and be allowed in high schools only after the end of the school day.

How about the use of high fructose corn syrup in flavored milk?
As with most everything we eat, people can enjoy sweeteners, including high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), when consumed in moderation. When it comes to flavored milk, the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Dietetic Association and the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans Committee agree that the added sugar in flavored milk does not negate milk's many health benefits. Specifically in regard to HFCS, there is very little difference between

sucrose, which is granulated sugar, and HFSC. Once absorbed, they are indistinguishable to the human body. For more information refer to the following documents: International Food Information Council "Food Insights" article, www.ific.org/foodinsight/2004/ja/fructosefi404.cfm; "Fact sheet from the American Dietetic Association," www.eatright.org/ada/files/Hot.pdf.

Do the added sugars in flavored milk cause hyperactivity?
No. Scientific reviews indicate that sugar intake does not cause hyperactivity or other behavioral problems or interfere with academic performance in children.[9,10] Reports that sugar intake causes hyperactivity or other behavioral or learning problems in children have been based on anecdotal reports, not adequately controlled experiments.

Do the sweeteners in milk cause tooth decay?
No. Because flavored milk is a beverage, it is less likely to cause cavities than sticky foods. The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry agrees that chocolate milk is a healthy beverage and, in fact, the calcium, phosphorus and cocoa in chocolate milk actually may protect teeth from decay.

Does chocolate in milk affect calcium absorption?
No. Chocolate milk contains a small amount of oxalic acid, a compound found in cocoa beans and other plants. The very small amount of this compound in chocolate milk has no significant affect on the availability of milk's calcium.

How much caffeine is in chocolate milk?
Each cup of chocolate milk has about 2 to 7 mg of caffeine, the same amount that's found in one cup of decaffeinated coffee. This tiny amount of caffeine in chocolate milk is too small to affect most children. Colas, on the other hand, may contain up to 10 times more caffeine than chocolate milk.

Do children and young adults choose flavored milk?
Yes. Flavored milk is a favorite with kids because it tastes great and is "kid cool." When offered at school, chocolate milk is the most popular choice of milk. A study showed that milk consumption increased at school when chocolate milk was offered.

Can you drink chocolate milk if you are lactose intolerant?
Chocolate milk may be more easily digested than unflavored milk in people with lactose intolerance. In fact, most individuals with a limited ability to break down lactose can drink two cups of any type of milk a day when consumed in small servings or with other foods.

References:

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