

IS FLAVORED MILK GOOD FOR MY KIDS?

By Vivian Matiossian MS, RD, CDE



Many parents complain that their child or teen doesn't drink milk. Is flavored milk a good alternative? The Dairy Council provides answers to some common questions about flavored milk.

Q: Does flavored milk have the same amount of calcium and vitamin D as regular 100% milk?

A: 8 ounces of flavored or unflavored milk provides 300 milligrams calcium. Vitamin D is fortified in flavored milk at the same level of unflavored milk and milk is one of the most common food sources. Adequate amounts of vitamin D are critical for calcium absorption and maintaining strong bones for life. Flavored milk is also a good source of high quality protein, vitamin E, potassium and magnesium. It is liked by many children and teens and is a great way to meet their daily calcium needs.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends the following daily intake of calcium:

Age	Calcium need (milligrams per day)	Servings of milk/milk products to meet daily need
4-8 years	800	3 servings
9-18 years	1,300	4 servings

Q: Isn't there a lot of sugar added to flavored milk?

A: Flavored 100% milk does contain added sugar. However, most of the carbohydrate (sugar) listed on the nutrient label is lactose, the natural sugar found in milk. It contains an equivalent to 2 to 4 teaspoons of sugar or an additional 30 to 60 calories per 8 ounce cup. In comparison, regular sodas contain up to 8 teaspoons of added sugar per serving and fruit drinks contain 6 to 9 teaspoons of sugar per serving. As bottles get bigger, so does the sugar content. Therefore, even though the serving size may be 8 ounces on a bottle, if the whole bottle is 20 ounces, the child may get up to 26 teaspoons sugar.

Q: Do the extra calories in flavored milk cause children to gain weight?

A: Researchers suggest that children's sugar intake does not increase with the consumption of flavored milk because the intake of soda and fruit drinks declines as milk consumption increases. You could also select flavored milk that is low fat or fat free. Remember, to limit even 100% juice to 8 ounces per day because excess can lead to weight gain.

Q: Do the sugar and caffeine in chocolate milk cause hyperactivity?

A: An 8 ounce serving of chocolate milk has less sugar than 8 ounce soda and about the same amount as in orange juice. Chocolate milk also has about one-tenth of the amount of caffeine found in cola and coffee. So, unless your child is extremely sensitive to sugar and/or caffeine, consuming chocolate milk will not affect his or her behavior or activity level.

The foundation for a lifetime of strong bones is built during the teen and young adult years until age 30. This is the period where the bones will become the strongest it will ever be. After this period, the strength of bones declines unless adequate calcium and vitamin D are consumed. Help your child towards a strong future.