

ALTERNATIVES TO MILK

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES



Milk and other dairy products are a top source of calcium for Americans and a critical mineral kids need to build strong bones and help muscles and nerves. According to MyPlate, children 2-3 years old need 2.5 cups from the dairy group per day. Calcium requirements increase as children get older, so from 9 years on, they need 3 cups from the dairy group per day.

CAN'T OR WON'T DRINK MILK?

Many parents feel anxious when their child won't – or can't – drink milk. If you're working on getting your child to accept milk, try these dairy equivalents:

- Blend 8 ounces of yogurt into a fruit smoothie (equal to 1 cup milk)
- Make mini-pizzas with whole-grain English muffins, tomato sauce, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup shredded cheese (equal to 1 cup milk)
- Serve $\frac{1}{2}$ cup instant pudding made with reduced-fat milk as an occasional treat (equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk)
- Offer $\frac{1}{2}$ cup cottage cheese with fresh fruit (equal to $\frac{1}{4}$ cup milk)
- Milk can be disguised in your child's favorite foods, too. Try mixing it in oatmeal, cold cereal, cream-based and tomato soups, and homemade smoothies.

Just be sure to choose low-fat options such as 1% or non-fat milk. These deliver all the nutrition of 2% or whole milk with a fraction of the amount of saturated fat. That makes them healthier for kids' hearts.

ALTERNATIVES TO DAIRY:

Vegan lifestyles and food allergies are common reasons that some children do not consume dairy products. Soymilk provides protein and can be a source of calcium and vitamin D when fortified with these nutrients. Not all non-dairy alternative brands and styles are created equal. Parents should compare Nutrition Facts Labels and select beverages that provide calcium, protein and vitamin D and no added sugars. Parents should consult an allergist and registered dietitian nutritionist about which milk substitutes are best based on their child's needs.

GET CREATIVE:

It's still possible to meet calcium and vitamin D needs every day! There are many foods to choose from:

- Find cereals that are fortified with calcium (check Nutrition Label)
- Substitute canned salmon for tuna in sandwiches at lunch
- Blend kale with frozen fruit in a smoothie
- Serve dark leafy greens such as cooked collard greens or bok choy as a side dish or mixed in casseroles or soups at dinner
- Stir sliced figs and almonds into hot cereals

