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Soft Drinks and School-Age Children

Flavored Milks

Flavored milks can play a role in changing negative trends in children's beverage consumption. Flavored milks offer a well-accepted, nutritious alternative in the wide array of beverages available to children. An analysis of the 1994-96 and 1998 USDA Continuing Survey of Food Intakes of Individuals data on beverage consumption showed:

Children who drank flavored milk drank more milk[1]

There was no association between flavored milk intake and percent calories from saturated fat[1]

Children who drank flavored milk had a lower soft drink intake[1]

Children who drank flavored milk had higher calcium intakes[1]

Children who drank flavored milk did NOT have increased sugar intakes[1]

What is flavored milk?

Flavored milk is simply plain cow's milk, with a little added flavoring and sweetener. It's available in chocolate, strawberry, banana, root beer, chocolate malt, cookies and cream, caramel, mocha cappuccino and other flavors in whole, reduced-fat, low-fat and fat-free varieties.[2]

How nutritious is flavored milk?

Like all milk, flavored milk is a rich source of calcium, protein, vitamin D, vitamin A, vitamin B_{12}, phosphorus, riboflavin, potassium and niacin. Milk's nutrients, especially calcium, are necessary for developing strong bones and teeth. 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.[2] The calorie level of plain and flavored milks is largely determined by the fat content of the milk.

Do the sweeteners in milk cause hyperactivity?

No. Flavored milks contain less table sugar per 8-ounce serving than cola drinks. According to scientific research, sugar does not cause hyperactivity or mood swings in children.[2]

Do the sweeteners in milk cause tooth decay?

No. 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.[2]

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.[2]

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.[2]

[1]Johnson, Frary, Wang, Journal of the American Dietetic Association 2002;102:853-856
[2]www.nutritionexplorations.org/school_cafe/chock_it_up/flavored_milk_info.html