



Family Nutrition In Action

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Are Sippy Cups Dangerous to My Child's Teeth?

Many parents use sippy cups when weaning babies from bottles. However, dentists now say that using sippy cups too much or for too long can cause tooth decay, just like baby bottles.

These cups let liquids touch the front teeth for a long period of time, especially if your child uses the cup throughout the day. If the cup has milk, juice, or another sweet drink, the teeth can decay.

Baby teeth are important. They help your child speak and chew food. They also hold the place for permanent teeth, which may not come in for several years. Here are some ways to help keep your child's teeth healthy:

- T Only give a sippy cup at meals and snacks. Don't let your child use it throughout the day. If your child does use it between meals and snacks, put only water in the cup.
- T Wipe your infant's or toddler's teeth with a clean damp cloth once a day. By age 2, start using a soft toothbrush and a small amount of toothpaste.

- T Take your child to the dentist when the first tooth comes in, or no later than your child's first birthday.

Start weaning your infant from the bottle by one year of age. Weaning should take about six months, so your toddler should be using a regular cup by about 18 months of age.

Can My Toddler Drink Too Much Juice or Milk?

Your child gets important nutrients from drinking milk and 100% fruit juices. Milk has calcium and vitamin D, while 100% fruit juice may have added vitamin C and calcium.

However, children **can** get too much of a good thing! Toddlers who fill up on milk or juice are too full to eat other nutritious foods. And drinking too much fruit juice can lead to diarrhea.

Try to limit your toddler to 2 or 3 cups of milk a day and $\frac{2}{3}$ cup of 100% fruit juice a day. Offer water to satisfy your child's thirst during the day and save the milk and juice for mealtimes.



What Kind of Milk is Best for My Toddler?

It's best to give whole milk to toddlers under the age of two. They need the calories and nutrients in fat to grow and develop, and lower-fat milk doesn't have enough fat. **(Infants should only drink breast-milk or iron-fortified formula.)**

After age two, switch to 1% or fat-free milk. Everyone in the family over age two can benefit from lower-fat foods!

Health food drinks like soy milk and rice drinks may not give your toddler the nutrients needed for growth and development. These drinks do not naturally have the same nutrients as cow's milk, like calcium, vitamin D, and protein.

If your toddler cannot drink cow's milk, talk to your child's doctor about the best milk choice.



Help! My Toddler Only Eats One Food!



When a toddler wants the same food for every meal, it's called a food jag. Many parents worry about food jags. They wonder if their toddlers are getting all the important nutrients.

The good news is that these food jags usually don't last long! And the nutrients your child gets are balanced over a period of time.

So what's a parent to do? Here are some steps for less stressful mealtimes:

- T It's your job to make mealtimes pleasant and offer a variety of healthy foods—**it's not your job to make your child eat.** Offer your toddler's favorite food along with some other healthy choices.
- T It's your child's job to decide what foods to eat from the foods you offer. Your child also decides how much to eat.
- T Be patient! Remember that food jags won't last long.

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